

The Case Program

Developing quality teaching materials for public sector education in Australia and New Zealand.



the Australia and New Zealand
School of Government

ANZSOG's case program: a message from the dean

The Australia and New Zealand School of Government (ANZSOG) is a consortium of governments and universities that share a vision of creating a world-class institution which focuses on the needs of the government and community sectors. Consortium members recognise that one of the significant challenges for all governments in the 21st century is to enhance the breadth and depth of policy and management skills and invest in the further education and development of those who are destined to be leaders in the public sector.

Excellence in teaching is central to ANZSOG's mission, and a key feature is the use of case teaching and other interactive approaches. It calls for educational methods that draw on participants' experiences, challenge them to reflect on judgments and opinions and involve them in discussion with their peers and our faculty.

The 'ANZSOG region' of Australia, New Zealand and Oceania, is an acknowledged innovator in public sector reform but, until the establishment of the ANZSOG Case Program in 2004, this was not complemented by a tradition of case teaching or a bank of case studies. The Case Program has moved rapidly to fill this gap, reaching the 100-case milestone in early 2010 and regularly running workshops on writing and teaching cases.

Case development is strongly supported by the participating governments and our writers have unprecedented access to decision makers involved in recent, often controversial events. Course participants respond enthusiastically to the teaching method. The Case Program is an integral and essential part of ANZSOG's unique mix of national and international learning, networking, collaboration and research in the areas of public policy and management.

Allan Fels

Professor Allan Fels, AO
Dean



We believe it is vital that our participants, who are experienced managers, are enthusiastically engaged in the learning process, which demands more than simply lecturers standing, talking at them.

ANZSOG cases have forged a reputation as concise, engaging and relevant – they provide an active window into current public sector practice in the southern hemisphere.

ANZSOG acknowledges with appreciation the support of the Commonwealth Secretariat and the New Zealand State Services Commission for the establishment of the Case Program.

The ANZSOG case program

ANZSOG is committed to delivering an internationally acclaimed case teaching program with outstanding teachers and a library of topical, stimulating case studies.

ANZSOG's specialist teaching area is public policy and management in Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific region. Our online Case Library www.casestudies.anzsog.edu.au already includes more than 100 case studies covering a wide range of issues, agencies and jurisdictions.

The program unit has case writers in Wellington and Melbourne who are available to assist external writers with case development. ANZSOG regularly organises practical workshops on case teaching and writing, and is always seeking new, well-written teaching case studies of 1500 to 6000 words. The Case Program can fund the development of cases or teaching materials by or for academic staff in ANZSOG's partner institutions or public servants in member governments. See [Developing new cases](#) for more details.

Cases developed under this program are deposited in ANZSOG's Case Library and are accessible to member institutions. Relevant organisations are also able to commission cases, subject to ANZSOG approval. The Library contains a number of case studies developed with the sponsorship of individual agencies, usually to document a learning experience for use in internal training.

Enquiries about the Case Program can be made by calling ANZSOG or emailing info@casestudies.anzsog.edu.au

ANZSOG Partners

Governments

The Commonwealth of Australia
New Zealand
The Australian Capital Territory
New South Wales
The Northern Territory
Queensland
South Australia
Tasmania
Victoria
Western Australia

Universities/business schools

Australian National University
Carnegie Mellon University
Charles Darwin University
Curtin University of Technology
Flinders University
Griffith University
Melbourne Business School Limited
Monash University
The University of Melbourne
The University of New South Wales
The University of Queensland
The University of Sydney
University of Canberra
University of Tasmania
University of Western Australia
Victoria University of Wellington

What is the case method?

The case method of teaching was initially introduced at the Harvard Law School in the 1870s and was in wide use in law schools by 1910.

In the management field, it was first utilised at Harvard Business School after World War One. Since then it has been adopted and adapted at management schools around the world, and increasingly is being used by schools of public policy or public administration, as well as in other disciplines.¹ A teaching case is defined by Lynn as:

‘...a story, describing or based on actual events and circumstances, that is told with a definite teaching purpose in mind and that rewards careful study and analysis.’²



Teaching a case

Case teaching requires a presenter not only to be expert on the relevant content, but also to be adept in leading discussions. During a session, they have to keep track of three things simultaneously:

1. the facts of the case
2. the substantive concepts that can be explained using the case
3. the process of the discussion (e.g. ensuring everyone is contributing, key positions are getting airtime, moments for ‘punchlines’ are orchestrated, etc.).

All professional schools face the same difficult challenge: how to prepare students for the world of practice. Time in the classroom must somehow translate directly into real-world activity: how to diagnose, decide, and act. A surprisingly wide range of professional schools... have concluded that the best way to teach these skills is by the case method.

David A. Garvin, Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School

What is the case method?
continued

In the decision maker's shoes

The power of case teaching comes from the fact that it gives practical shape and illustration to concepts. For example, it is one thing to say in the abstract that 'Public servants have multiple accountabilities'; it is another altogether to consider a real public servant caught between several contending accountabilities and wrestling with how to juggle them. Such a concrete situation brings the concept of multiple accountability to life.

The story usually has a lead protagonist, who is faced with some kind of dilemma. In the case method, the presenter conducts the class by leading a discussion of the case (which students have studied prior to the session), asking well-framed questions (e.g. What is the problem facing the manager here?, What has caused it?) and follow-up probes (e.g. Is that the real reason why the contractor is prevaricating?) as the session proceeds.

At relevant intervals, the presenter may interpolate brief statements or even mini lectures, linking the points being made to each other or to key concepts (e.g. This is a good example of a clash between a professional and a managerial culture. Key elements of these cultures are ...).

Michiel Leenders and James Erskine of Ontario's Ivey School of Business explain:

'Cases are used to enable students to learn about decision making by putting themselves in the shoes of actual managers. Students analyse situations, develop alternatives, choose action and implementation plans and communicate their findings. Cases are used to test understanding of theory, to connect theory with application, and to develop theoretical insight. Cases enable students to learn by doing and teaching others.'³

Case teaching is both more interactive and more indirect. The method is based in the belief ... that 'wisdom can't be told.'

Howard Husock, Vice President,
Manhattan Institute for Policy Research

Cases are excellent vehicles for sensitising students to the kinds of judgments they will need to make and skills they will need to exercise in managing in various situations in their working life.

The learning depends as much on the students' preparation and contributions as on the teacher.

1. See L. Lynn 1999, *Teaching and Learning with Cases: A Guidebook*, Chatham House, New York.

2. *ibid.*

3. M. Leenders and J. Erskine 2001, *Writing Cases*, University of Western Ontario, London.

What makes a good case?

The most important fact about a case is that it is used for teaching. This has several inter related implications:

It must be useful for discussing concepts

Although the case itself is in the form of a descriptive narrative, it must lend itself to illustrating, applying or elaborating theories in the classroom. As a Kennedy School paper observes, 'Every case needs a theory'.⁴ It is more than just a story about something interesting that has happened (although it should be that as well – see below). It also enables concepts to be explored while making sense of the story. For example, a case describing the failure of a contract for child protection services in an ethnic community can be used to explore the difficulties of specifying and monitoring outsourced services, illustrating concepts of bounded rationality, information asymmetry and inter-dependency.⁵

Good cases are like onions – the more you peel away the outer layers, the more you discover inside. Thus, the headline problem may not be, in fact, the real problem.

Derek F. Abell, Professor Emeritus, European School of Management and Technology

It is different from a research case study

A teaching case is an elaborate form of a question rather than a settled version of an 'answer'. While it describes circumstances or events as accurately as possible, it usually leaves aspects of the situation untold or unexplored. All teaching cases follow one of two formats.⁶

In **prospective cases**, the story is suspended at the point before the policy maker or manager has to make a decision, providing information on the problem, the surrounding circumstances and – in many instances – one or more potential options. The class discussion proceeds by considering and usually debating what the manager should do, with the lecturer using the discussion to draw out or apply concepts. Afterwards, students may read a short epilogue outlining what the manager actually did and why, allowing them to compare their own responses.

In **retrospective cases**, the whole story is told and the discussion typically considers whether the decision taken was the best one given the situation. While the case is a complete account of what happened and why, it can prompt discussion about alternative possibilities and outcomes. It also usually leaves the 'substructure' of meanings and deeper causal factors untouched, leaving room for exploration of relevant concepts.



4. D. Robyn 1986, 'What Makes a Good Case?', Kennedy School of Government Case Program, Harvard University, Cambridge.

5. P. Varley 1994, 'DSS La Alianza Hispana and the Public-Private Question in Child Protection Work', Kennedy School of Government Case Program, Harvard University, Cambridge.

6. Robyn, op.cit.

What makes a good case?
continued

It poses a question to which there is no obvious right answer

A good case should be open to a variety of interpretations and a variety of solutions, which isn't to say that all are equally valid; some responses are better supported than others. Part of the discussion process is to test the strengths and limitations of different approaches. Each case should contain a problem, dilemma, contradiction or paradox. Ideally, it is not a simple 'good news' or 'best practice' story and certainly should not constitute a hagiography. While protagonists can prevail in the end, better cases will see them make mistakes or encounter setbacks that have to be overcome along the way. The purpose of cases is not to learn of practices to be emulated, but rather of concepts to help understand and deal with complex future situations.

It focuses on people as actors or decision makers

A case should have preferably one (but perhaps more than one) central figure, who is faced with the dilemma or problem that is the focus of the case. It should be possible for the lecturer to ask questions about what this policy maker or manager should do. This is less possible if the case merely describes an organisation, context or issue without naming any of the individuals who must deal with the situation, although such cases can still allow students to assume hypothetical decision making posts.

It should be engagingly written

In addition to all of the above, a case should convey the reality of a story in an interesting and arresting fashion. Students should be able to identify with the situation and its characters and/or feel interested or even excited about the dilemma the central figures face. This is more likely to happen if the case contains a problem or dilemma.

Types of cases

A 'star-quality case' (as defined by Lynn) will exhibit the attributes outlined above, while prompting students to think critically and analytically in order to evaluate the problem and potential solutions. It should require students to draw on information contained within the case so the text should give them sufficient information to do so. Case problems can be presented in a variety of different ways, although some lend themselves better to discussion than others. Laurence Lynn provides a classification of five main types:⁷

- **Decision-forcing cases** – he considers these the most popular because of 'the conviction among teachers in the professions that the essence of professional skill is the ability to make decisions under trying circumstances' and 'because they encourage the systematic and disciplined consideration of complex information'
- **Policy-making cases** may or may not be decision-forcing and are designed to 'encourage principled thinking leading towards action'
- **Problem-defining cases**, again, may be decision-forcing but are geared to get students to accurately identify a problem in a given situation
- **Concept-application cases** are specifically designed to allow students to apply a theory to a real-life situation
- **Illustrative cases** are 'historical record[s] of what happened and why, as determined by the case writer ... In that sense, an illustrative case is equivalent in many respects to a lecture or to a chapter in a textbook'. Illustrative cases 'do not lend themselves to creative interaction'

A case may combine a number of types; for example, a policy-making case may have problem-defining elements which have to be addressed before a decision is made.

7. Lynn, op. cit., pp. 107–110.

Sample case summaries

Below are three summaries of cases from the ANZSOG Case Library, available from <www.casestudies.anzsog.edu.au> Each example cites the opening paragraph of the case, then explains its content and teaching rationale.

Discussion is more lively and interactive, and general principles mean so much more when they have been discussed in relation to a specific case. Students who otherwise would not say anything are also much more active in the discussion. The ANZSOG cases are right on the mark in terms of their relevance to the students.

George Argyrous, School of Social Sciences and International Studies, University of New South Wales

Troubled waters at Port Stephens

In November 2001, Australian Radiata Pty lodged a Development Application with the New South Wales Department of Planning to establish a 94-hectare commercial pearl farm in Port Stephens. NSW Fisheries considered it an opportunity to establish a profitable industry that would have broad economic and social benefits with minimal environmental impact. However, the local community was strongly opposed to the proposal, feeling they had not been properly consulted and fearing threats to marine mammals, port ecology and tourism. After a Commission of Inquiry, Planning Minister Andrew Refshauge had to determine whether the application would be approved.

This case, which traces a controversial development application for three years, is ideal for teaching how policy is developed. The three parts cover the perspectives of a wide range of stakeholders.

ANZSOG Case 2007-52: Part A 16 pp + exhibits; Part B 5 pp + exhibits; Part C 4 pp + exhibits.

ANZSOG cases are a great pathway to getting participants intellectually engaged with real world issues. I find that cases allow concepts to be understood and tested in a far more dynamic way than through traditional lecturing methods. I also love the fact that ANZSOG cases are about things that happen here rather than in faraway places.

Peter Thompson, Fellow ANZSOG; Presenter 'Talking Heads' ABC TV

Leading culture change at NZ Police

On 3 April 2007, New Zealand's top policeman, Commissioner Howard Broad, prepared to face the media to respond to the Commission of Inquiry into Police Conduct. The 322-page report revealed disgraceful conduct by police officers. Allegations of sexual assault, dating back to the late 1970s, had been swirling round for three years. Some involved a high-ranking officer. Although the Inquiry noted improvements in police culture since the 1980s, Broad was faced with a daunting task. The Prime Minister wanted public confidence in the police, severely shaken, be restored. It was Broad's responsibility to achieve this.

This case, while centred on specific circumstances at New Zealand Police, is relevant for examining more general questions of ethics and culture change in a large organisation. A teaching note accompanies this case.

ANZSOG Case 2008-82: Part A 7 pp; Part B 3 pp.

Privatising Melbourne's public transport system

On 16 December 2002, National Express, the biggest of three private operators in the Melbourne public transport system, abruptly announced it was abandoning its train and tram franchises only three years into its 12 and 15-year contracts. In an effort to improve performance and lower taxpayers' subsidies, the government of the State of Victoria had undertaken a privatisation of the city's train and tram networks in August 1999. One British and two French operators won contracts to operate parts of the system. With National Express gone, half the system was back in government hands.

This case recounts Victoria's experiment of franchising its public transport, enabling exploration of when privatisation may or may not make sense, difficulties in specifying, monitoring and rewarding performance, and managing contractual relationships. A short sequel describes the government's decision to put one private company in charge of each mode of transport (train and tram).

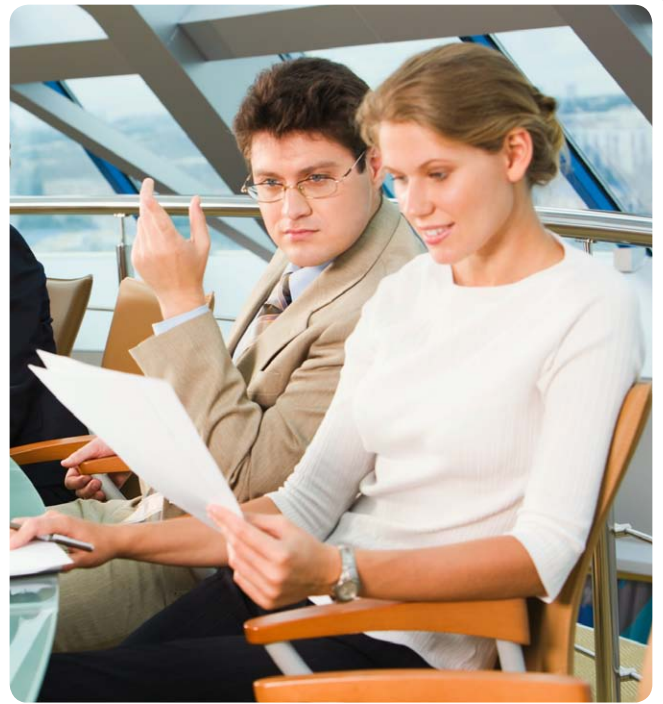
ANZSOG case 2004.3: 11 pp + exhibits; epilogue 3 pp.



Developing new cases

ANZSOG is always on the lookout for interesting new case studies that will stimulate discussion about recent or current events in the public sector. Topic areas include leadership, policy development, regulation, strategic communication and ethics.

Cases can consist of several parts, designed to be taught over several sessions, or short vignettes that can be read quickly before discussion in class. Teaching notes are sought after, as are cases supported by audio or video exhibits. ANZSOG offers guidance for both writers of cases and teachers using cases.



Got an idea for a case?

Maybe you don't have a fully formed idea for a case study, but you know of an interesting story or a frustrating but instructive situation. Has someone tried to solve a 'wicked problem' with multiple complexities and limited information? When an issue has people talking or hits the headlines, have you thought 'there's a lesson here'? Has a hard-hitting report been published or a high-profile inquiry concluded recently? These are all seeds for a good case study. A teaching need is also an excellent starting point. What is the teaching outcome you are looking for, or what theory do you want to illustrate?

How do I start?

Once you've identified a subject of interest, take your case ideas to ANZSOG and discuss how they can be developed. Cases can be written by the program unit staff, or

- an academic (or academics) in one of ANZSOG's partner institutions
- a contract researcher, supervised by an academic in a partner institution
- a contract writer, supervised by an academic.

ANZSOG is committed to developing expertise in case teaching and case writing. ANZSOG's program unit provides advice to those without previous experience as well as offering regular practical workshops.

Developing new cases
continued

Funding

The amount available for each case is likely to vary between A\$3000 and A\$10,000, depending on the length and complexity of the proposed case. Preference will be given to cases that fill current teaching needs in ANZSOG programs or address gaps in our Case Library collection.

Applicants are asked to propose and justify the level of funding required. Funds will be paid to the individual who takes responsibility for the delivery of the case to the deadline proposed. Payments will be according to a schedule agreed between the fundee and a director or other designated person from the Program Unit.

The application process

Applicants for funding should submit a two-page outline of the project, including a brief description of the case, the teaching outcomes expected, the research and development methodologies, the proposed completion date and brief resumes of the academic supervisor and case writer. Download the proforma available at <www.casestudies.anzsog.edu.au> and send completed forms to:

ANZSOG Case Program

ANZSOG
PO Box 4023
Parkville Victoria
Australia 3052

Alternatively, forms can be forwarded to info@casestudies.anzsog.edu.au marked 'New case application'.

Funding approval

Once submitted, the application will be considered by editorial representatives of the Case Program, who can either:

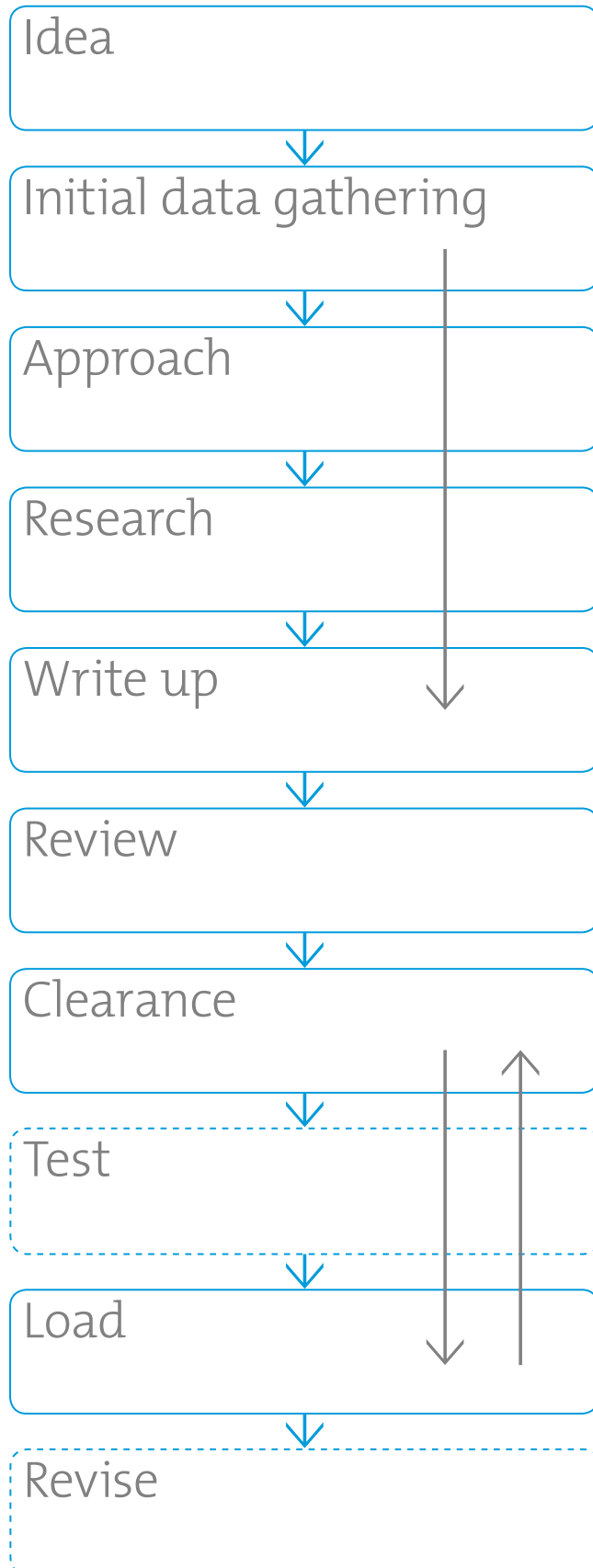
- accept the application as proposed
- propose variations in emphasis or funding to the applicant
- reject it
- refer it to the full editorial committee of the Case Program for further review.

Commissioning a case

On occasion, government departments or agencies will commission ANZSOG to produce a case on problems or issues recently faced by the organisation. These cases are then used inhouse for training purposes and in ANZSOG courses. Cases provide organisations with the opportunity to capture valuable information and reflect on significant events. However, commissions are only accepted in situations where ANZSOG's teaching objectives and the organisation's needs are compatible. Departments or agencies wishing to fund a case are invited to contact ANZSOG's Case Program Director to discuss proposals in more depth.



The case production process



ANZSOG cases usually pass through the following stages, though some steps may be repeated or omitted depending on the nature of the case.

Idea generation

This stage sees the development of the case idea, and, as discussed, can come from a variety of sources, including:

- current events
- reports/inquiries
- ANZSOG students
- organisations.

Case writers/academics will clarify the learning objectives of the case and explore the concepts, theories or skills that the case is designed to elucidate. If necessary, the writer might undertake some background reading first.

The case production process
continued

Initial data gathering

The evaluation stage is the initial research and information-gathering stage. The writer should research available materials on the episode in question, drawing on annual reports, news articles and so on. From this, it may be helpful to compile a preliminary chronology of events. Questions to ask at this stage include:

- How much information is available/accessible/printable?
- Who are the principal players?
- Are interviews possible?

A provisional case outline may be prepared, which summarises the basic story, maps out a direction for the case and identifies prospective interview subjects. The case supervisor will review the outline and amend it accordingly. If there is ample, publicly available information, writers may sometimes proceed straight to the writing phase.

Approach

Potential interviewees are contacted and organisational permission sought, if necessary. Where possible, the writer/supervisor should interview a key person involved in the situation, who is able to give an informed overview of the story. This may be the head of the agency, someone who was at the centre of events, or someone with special knowledge of the circumstances.

Research

During the research phase, the bulk of the information is collected and assessed. Interviews with participants (usually 2–6 people) are conducted and relevant documents are gathered. Interviews are usually taped for ease of review though the content remains confidential, other than those excerpts included in the case with the permission of the interviewee (see Clearance).

Write-up

Once sufficient material is amassed, the case research is distilled into a first draft.

Review

When ready, the writer sends the case to a relevant ANZSOG reviewer for comment. Suggestions or changes are incorporated and when both parties are satisfied, the case is then sent to the interview subjects for comment. Any necessary revisions are applied or discussed.

Clearance

If required, the final draft of the case, complete with exhibits, is sent to the subject organisation/s for official authorisation. The case will not be circulated until an ANZSOG Case Program proforma is signed.

This does not mean that interviewees can prevent the case from being distributed, but there may need to be a negotiation to arrive at mutually acceptable wording on sensitive matters. ANZSOG does not wish to get into disputes with subject agencies about cases; it is nearly always possible to arrive at an agreement on wording.

Test

Where possible or desirable, some cases may be given a classroom trial to gauge teaching utility and student response. This provides another opportunity to identify any gaps or ambiguity in the text.

Load

Once content is finalised, a draft is sent to the Case Library and made available for use by academics in partner institutions.

Revise

Cases may be periodically updated, subject to new developments.

Some questions and answers

Do I need to itemise a budget in the proposal or describe how the case study funding will be spent?

Major costs, such as staff and travel, should be outlined. (Download a proforma for more details).

Can I act as both academic supervisor and writer of a case?

Yes.

Can groups of people act as academic supervisors or writers of a case?

Yes, provided a single person takes responsibility for delivery.

How long should the written case be?

Written cases should be between 500 and 6000 words (i.e. 2–20 pages), plus any additional appendices. Typically, cases are about 8 pages.

Who is the intended audience for the case?

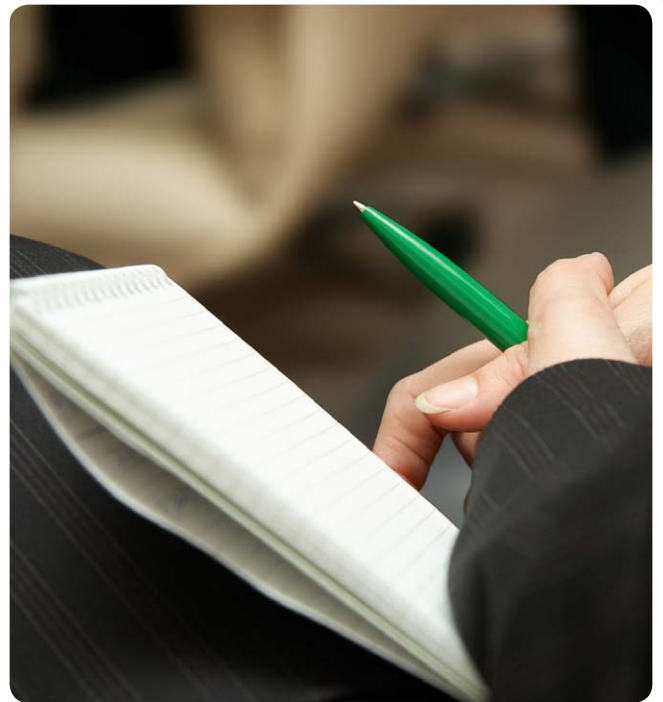
Cases should be written for middle- to senior-level public servants who are engaged in masters-level study or in executive development programs.

What does a completed case include?

A completed case includes: (where necessary)

- a summary paragraph about the case and its teaching focus for the website
- references, exhibits, diagrams
- an epilogue describing 'what happened next' for teaching purposes.
- signed release forms.

Teaching notes add significant value to the case study and are welcomed as part of completed cases. Please discuss what approach to take with the program unit.



What qualifications does a case writer need?

ANZSOG expects that either the writer or the supervisor has some understanding of the public sector and demonstrated experience of case writing. ANZSOG runs regular case writing workshops and can provide guidance.

What criteria will be used in choosing the successful case study proposals?

Criteria used to assess case proposals are:

- the strength of the proposed case as a way of explaining or testing an important theory
- the extent to which the case is likely to engage learners in discussion of the issues
- how well the case will contribute to priority learning needs for ANZSOG programs
- the availability of existing material, such as partially completed research or official information, that can reduce development time and indicate the nature of the case
- how likely it is that the case will be of enduring significance
- the accessibility of key decision makers in the organisation being studied.

Who has copyright for the finished case?

ANZSOG retains copyright for all cases it funds. The writer(s) and supervisor(s) are clearly identified at the bottom of the front page.

Do I have the right to publish the case study or the research associated with the case study elsewhere?

Yes, but ANZSOG's financial contribution must be acknowledged in any other publication of the material. A copyright agreement, included with each contract, will explain how this should be done.

The ANZSOG Case Library online

Once finalised and signed off, all cases are deposited in the ANZSOG Case Library, administered from a base at Victoria University of Wellington.

The library can be browsed by members of the public, but case downloads are only available to members signed up through the website <www.casestudies.anzsog.edu.au>. The case website also provides writing and teaching support information, including a Style Guide and proforma teaching notes.

ANZSOG case studies have been developed specifically for the use of ANZSOG and its affiliates. Membership of the Case Library is available on a preferential basis (currently free of charge) to academics and other approved persons from partner institutions and governments, as well as to ANZSOG alumni.

Many of the concepts and teaching points in the case studies are applicable to other organisations and learning situations. Membership of the Case Library is available to non-ANZSOG affiliates, such as other universities, for a small charge. This paid membership is only available to applicants based within the ANZSOG area of Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island nations. ANZSOG case studies are available to other interested users through the European Case Clearing House, <www.ecch.com>.





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