
CASE STUDY 1

Authentic Assessment in Business Education – the Integrated Case Study (a Capstone Project)

Discipline	Business and Entrepreneurship
Student Numbers	40 – 80



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Introduction and Context

We are presenting a final year business case study which is applied across seven modules as an example of a shared assessment which is authentic in terms of the business environment. CIMA (Chartered Institute of Management Accountants) has given us permission to use and adapt their case study exams. The teaching team work collaboratively to assess each student's written report. Each student is also required to present and defend their recommendations to the team following submission. This approach reduces the assessment load for learners which is a frequently cited issue for final year students, and a Without this initiative, students would be facing, at minimum, an additional seven elements of assessment (Table 1) .

Table 1: Weighting of the Assessment

Assessment Weighting	Module	Percentage
Varies according to module but at least 20% of all participating modules	Strategic HRM (10 ECTS credits)	25%
	Taxation and Finance (10 ECTS credits)	20%
	International Entrepreneurship (5 ECTS credits)	50%
	Business Ethics (5 ECTS credits)	40%
	Strategy and Technology (10 ECTS credits)	25%
	Strategic Marketing (10 ECTS credits)	25%
	Strategic Entrepreneurship (10 ECTS credits)	25%
	Assessment as % of final award	28%

This case study requires students to problem solve in a real world context. It is a particularly appropriate teaching and assessment tool in business education as it gives the student the opportunity to:

- analyse real business situations,
- engage with complex problems in a time-pressured environment,
- draw on their accumulated knowledge across many modules to propose solutions to those problems and
- display their achievement of programme learning outcomes.

Authentic assessments are designed around tasks which require students to demonstrate skills and abilities which they will be required to practice in their careers (CAST, 2018; National Forum 2017). Using this integrated approach to assessment reinforces the relationship between teaching, learning and assessment. Feedback enhances the learning cycle through the encouragement of reflection. It reflects a move to assessment which is a more nuanced, complex and comprehensive assessment of knowledge and higher-order skills (Shepard, 2000; Birenbaum, 2003).

Authentic assessment is a model which enhances student employability through the promotion and development of skills and competencies which are required and valued in the workplace. It provides the opportunity for students to demonstrate problem solving (Wu, Heng, and Wang, 2015), autonomy (Swaffield, 2011), motivation (Gulikers, Bastiaens, Kirschner and Kester, 2008), self-regulation and metacognition (Wu, Heng and Wang, 2015). These approaches align with Universal Design for Learning (CAST, 2018). This is also reflective of an increasing emphasis on the learner's disposition-in-the-world that pushes assessment beyond formal attainment outcomes (Boud, 2014; Kreber, 2014)

Design and Implementation of the Assessment Strategy

The Integrated Case Study is a capstone project where the programme learning outcomes are assessed on a cross modular basis. The relevant programme learning outcomes are:

- to write, present and defend material that articulates ideas, insights and analysis, using a variety of business media.
- to analyse entrepreneurial environments and scenarios and to advise on decision

- making in a business context.
- to apply problem solving and innovative thinking across management, technology, finance, tax and marketing.
- to synthesise complex information, from an entrepreneurial context, and to draw out policy and ethical implications.

Individual module learning outcomes are also assessed through other module specific assessments. The principles of Universal Design for Learning have been applied to the design of this assessment (CAST, 2018). This assessment provides multiple means of both representation and engagement. It offers students the opportunity to demonstrate their learning in a structured context.

This authentic horizontal assessment reduces the assessment load for students. During the year, implementation of the integrated case study is a three stage approach. In stage one, students are given a practice case (November - formative). Students are provided with case study completion guidelines document to assist them in their approach to the process (See Appendix B). In stage two, they complete a minor case study (December - summative – 25% weighting). Stage three is the final case study in February (summative – 75% weighting).

The process operates as follows:

Background material on a fictional company is distributed seven days in advance of the assessment day. Students may work alone or in teams to research and consider the background of the company and its industry.

- At 9.00 a.m. on the assessment day, students are issued with a scenario (see Appendix A for a sample scenario) describing issues facing the company.
- Students have to individually prepare their own response to the scenario and to make recommendations to the company's board of directors.
- Students file a written report by 6.00 p.m. on the assessment day. (Maximum 2,500 words)
- Within one week each student is interviewed to allow them the opportunity to defend their recommendations to the lecturing team.



Figure 1. The Interview Process in Action

This scaffolding of the assessment process and combination of assessment techniques allows students to use combinations of skills (written assessment, presentation) to demonstrate their mastery of knowledge (Lombardi et al, 2011).

Assessment marking sheet for MAJOR case study.

Student: _____ Lecturer: _____

CRITERION	'First' (75%)	'2:1' (65%)	'2:2' (55%)	'Pass' (45%)	'FAIL' (30%)
30% Analysis.	Can analyse new data and situations without guidance using a wide range of techniques appropriate to the topic	Can analyse a range of information with minimum guidance, can apply major theories and compare methods for obtaining data.	Can analyse with guidance using given classification / principles.	Can analyse a limited range of information with guidance using classification / principles.	Fails to analyse information.
20% Synthesis.	With minimum guidance can transform data and concepts towards a given purpose and can design novel solutions.	Can reformat a range of ideas / information towards a given purpose.	Can collect/collate and categorise ideas and information in a predictable and standard format.	Partially collects/collates and categorises information in a structured way.	No organisation of ideas and information.
30% Rationale / Imagination.	Uses high levels of imagination / entrepreneurial thinking and explores a variety of different perspectives. Clear criteria are applied to demonstrate reasons for final decision.	Uses imagination and data to go beyond boundaries and applies good creative / entrepreneurial techniques with skills in order to solve problems.	Uses data, imagination and a limited range of entrepreneurial / creative techniques in problem solving.	Presents benefits and disadvantages of some potential outcomes. Shows little imagination and entrepreneurialism. Aware of some creative techniques and uses, but relatively few included.	Lacks imagination & entrepreneurial thinking. Does not exercise creative skills. Little explanation of how the final outcome was made.
15% Interview.	Can engage effectively and debate in a professional business manner.	Can communicate effectively in a business setting and report practical procedures in a clear and concise manner.	Can communicate effectively in a business setting and report in a clear and concise manner.	Some communication is effective and in a business format. Can report practical procedures in a structured way.	Communication is unstructured and unfocused and/or in a format inappropriate to business.
5% Presentation of assignment / Referencing.	Shows a polished and imaginative approach to the topic.	Carefully and logically Organised Referencing is mainly accurate.	Shows organisation and coherence. Referencing is mainly accurate.	Shows some attempt to organise in a logical manner. Some attempt at referencing.	Disorganised/ Incoherent. Referencing is absent/ Unsystematic

Comments: _____

Figure 2. Grading Rubric – Assessment Marking Sheet for the Major Case Study (Margaret Price and Chris Rust (2004), Oxford Brookes adapted).

We had a number of specific purposes in undertaking this initiative. Firstly, we wanted to address the issue of students prioritising the next project deadline. Secondly, we wanted to address an identified difficulty in assessing the skill and competency programme learning outcomes. Through the use of the Integrated Case Study we hoped to achieve the following:

- to encourage students to draw on their learning across many modules to deal with authentic complex business scenarios
- to reduce the pressure of multiple assessment deadlines
- to facilitate the achievement of programme learning outcomes.

Student engagement and attendance has been enhanced through the Integrated Case Study process. Both anecdotally and through post case study questionnaire analysis, the process has been acknowledged as one that has supported and enhanced student achievement.

Results and Evidence of Impact

The capstone Integrated Case Study is now a central feature of the final year assessment process. This authentic assessment approach has resulted in a number of key achievements for the final year teaching team. The approach results in a team of seven lecturers assessing student work from an integrated business perspective. This is only possible through the cooperation and collaboration of the lecturing team and their acknowledgment of the efficacy and impact of the assessment. Staff involvement and commitment has been at the core of the success of the process. As a teaching team, we are committed to on-going reflection and innovation in our teaching, learning and assessment approach in order to ensure that graduate attributes that mirror entrepreneurial competencies are achieved.

The reduction in the number of assessment deadlines has enabled students to work at a deeper level. The embedding of experiential learning as it pertains to entrepreneurship education at earlier stages of the programme has been hugely beneficial. Increased student tolerance for ambiguous or contradictory approaches from the teaching team on complex issues has been noted. The challenge in getting the teaching team and students into the same teaching space has been acknowledged.

The 2018/2019 Case Study is in the seventh year of implementation. From the outset, feedback from the student body has been an important element of the cycle. Each student cohort group from 2012/2013 onwards has been surveyed at the end of the process and we have acquired a substantial dataset. Feedback remains consistent (Figure 3). Students have responded favourably to this capstone project - they believe that it helps them to understand the relationships between different modules, that it simulates decision making in a real and meaningful way and that it assists them in developing their skillset in research, communication and time management.



Figure 3: Feedback on the Capstone Assessment.

As part of the assessment and feedback cycle, detailed feedback is provided following the minor case study. This is scheduled before the major case is circulated and in advance of grades being available. Here students engage actively in the feedback process which is a critical aspect of supporting and scaffolding their learning for the major case study. The feedback is both written and verbal and is provided by the team to all students collectively (Multiple means of representation, CAST, 2018). The focus is on constructive feedback which will enhance student performance and achievement in the major case. The feedback is structured around the marking criteria.

Extracts from the feedback are illustrated in the box below:

Analysis 35%

The analysis was often superficial and lacked detail. Consider if the analytic tools used are relevant and ensure their purpose is clear. Ensure that a justification for their use is provided. Generally, the application of the analytical tools to the case study was poor. Students must avoid simply repeating/ summarising the case study facts without providing additional analysis. Avoid any irrelevant analysis as this detracts from the quality of your work. Industry analysis - the Board would be familiar with the history of the industry and the company. The analysis should focus on areas that are likely to be part of the solution to the challenges. A key element of the company analysis was the collapse of operating profit from over 60 million to 3 million since 2013.

Students are surveyed for their feedback on the case study process through a written questionnaire which is circulated a week after completion of the case study (see Appendix C). Both closed and open questions are used in the questionnaire. Students are specifically asked to list the skills which they used during the case study process. Graduate attributes articulated by the students tended to focus around a combination of both soft and hard skills. Financial analysis, market research, problem solving and the ability to understand and synthesise information frequently featured in the feedback. In relation to the soft skills, organisation, leadership, teamwork and the capacity to adopt a holistic perspective to business issues were often highlighted in the feedback.

Finally, students are asked to comment on the case study process and to suggest improvements. A range of comments from the students is featured below:

'I enjoyed it!'

'I thought the case study was a better assessment than a thesis which suited me and I'd assume more students also'

'Very enjoyable project. I feel confident about similar going forward'

'Making minor adjustments during the case study would be tough on students but would be even more beneficial and realistic'

'I have added the skills used in this assignment to my LinkedIn profile'

This authentic assessment has improved the alignment between the intended programme learning outcomes and student employability skills. As can be noted from the feedback, students have reported favourably on an enhancement of both their soft and hard skillsets. Students are encouraged to develop a reflective approach to their learning and development. The student-centred and inclusive nature of this assessment is reflected in the mutuality of the learning process and the use by the teaching team of the feedback from students to modify and further enhance their learning.

Advice to Others for Implementation

Feedback from students has led to adaptation and enhancement of the process. The minor case study was introduced in the academic cycle 2015/2016 as a response to student requests to have more than one opportunity to complete the case study. As previously highlighted the assessment weighting for the minor case study is 25%, which represents 7% of the overall marks available across the seven modules. Thus while the minor case is relatively low stakes marks wise it provides students with an opportunity to learn from their experience and prepare more effectively for the major case.

Student feedback will continue to advance and shape the quality and efficacy of the assessment going forward e.g. this year students received individual feedback on their minor case report. One possibility that is currently under active consideration is to introduce a change to the scenario on the assessment day at noon. This would mimic a real world business experience and further enhance the authenticity of the assessment process.

Finally, it should be noted that the success of this authentic assessment is wholly based on the collaboration and input of the teaching team. Furthermore, a senior member of the teaching team bears the considerable administrative and developmental workload involved in both co-ordinating the case study process and developing and adapting CIMA case study resources to meet our specific requirements. This represents a potential challenge to the implementation of the case study as changes in members of the teaching team may impact negatively on the process. The Integrated Case Study represents an assessment which creates a richer learning environment for the students and the capacity to develop a higher order skillset

which enhances their employability. This constructive alignment of curriculum and assessment where the activities integrate skill developments that students will require in the real world environment (Ashford-Rowe, Herrington, and Brown 2014) is at the core of the Integrated Case study approach.

References

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Appendix A – Sample Scenario

Major Case Study Scenario 2019 - Royals Gyms. (Adapted from the original CIMA case study)

Marco King, Chief Executive Officer, has just sent you the following email at 9.00 a.m. on February 12, 2019:

“I am sure you have seen in the news headlines recently that the Government is keen to improve the health and fitness of the people of Hylandia. I am sure that Royals could play an important role in this initiative.

Yesterday, the Financial Controller at the Ministry of Health emailed me the attached proposal document, outlining the key details of the Gym Access Programme. This is part of the ‘Make Hylandia Healthy’ initiative, of which Royals is now officially a partner. I would like your help in analysing it, as I am due to meet with our Board of Directors tomorrow to discuss this proposal. Please write a report which:

- Describes the key macro-environmental factors which impact on the fitness industry, highlighting within this any potential threats or opportunities to Royals of involvement in this initiative.
- Identifies the potential benefits and challenges for Royals of taking part in such a public/private sector collaboration.
- Evaluates the financial implications of our involvement in this Gym Access Programme.
- Addresses the impact of this proposal on Royals’ risk factors as identified by the Board.
- Advises Royals on the proposal changes it should request from the Ministry of Health.

I need your report by 6.00 p.m. today.

Kind regards,
Marco King.

P.S. Our long term bank loans have a condition that if ‘interest cover’ goes under four times, the loans become repayable immediately.

Attachment 1.”

Proposal overview by the Ministry of Health in Hylandia.

Make Hylandia Healthy Initiative - Royals Gym Access Programme.

The Hylandia government will authorise doctors within local health authorities to encourage suitable patients to become more active.

Doctors will be able to arrange with Royals for the chosen patients to have free access to Royals gyms following an induction session. All patients, recommended to the Royals Gym Access Programme, will participate on a voluntary basis. The programme will run for a trial period of 6 months (from March 2019) and patients will be expected to commit to the whole 6-month programme.

The forecast number of patients per gym within the trial period is about 300. These patients are expected to attend at least one gym session per week for the duration of the programme.

The Hylandia Government will pay Royals H\$3 million for this trial period.

Requirements of Royals Gym:

1. All patients recommended by doctors to the programme will be given a one-hour induction and familiarisation session by Royals.
2. Royals will take full responsibility for any accidents occurring to patients on Royals' premises.
3. Patients must be supervised at all times.
4. The gyms must be accessible 24 hours a day for use by patients on the programme.

NOTES:

1. The Ministry of Health expects its partners to focus on Value for Money principles at all times.
2. Any new Royals gym opened during the trial period will NOT be expected to participate in the programme.
3. In countries where similar gym access programmes have been encouraged by governments, an estimated 25% of patients joined the gym as permanent members following the completion of the programme.
4. A rumour is circulating in social media that the government is about to award a large contract to Royals Gyms because it is in a 'cozy relationship' with the ruling party.

The end.

Appendix B - Case Study Guidelines

1. The word limit, including appendices, is 2,500 words. Submissions to be made via Turnitin. Financial appendices may be captured by screen shot. References are not included in the word count.
2. Referencing – it is not necessary to reference material from the company background material.
3. Collaboration – students may wish to collaborate for research purposes. Please note, in the report, the students you collaborated with. All other work on the report must be done on an individual basis.
4. The report should include:
 - Analysis of company using two tools – explain your rationale for choosing the two analytical tools. The company analysis should be at the beginning of your report i.e. not in the appendix.
 - Prioritisation of the scenario issues if applicable – include a concise explanation.
 - Ensure that you meet the requirements of your client i.e. answer the question.
 - Ethics – highlight any ethical issues facing the Board.
 - A conclusion is not required.
5. The mark, for each student's case study report, is an average of the lecturers' marks. Marking is weighted 25% on the minor case and 75% on the major case. The weighted average of the minor and major cases will be entered as your mark for the case study assignment for each module. Feedback will be provided to students in the form of provisional grades. Class feedback will also be provided on the minor case.
6. Please check the Blackboard version of this document for any updates.

The end.

Appendix C - Case Study Guidelines

Live Case Study Questionnaire on 19 February 2019.

1. In your opinion:

Was the assignment realistic?	Yes	No
Should we run the assignment next year?	Yes	No
Should less modules be involved?	Yes	No
Were the preparation classes adequate?	Yes	No
Reduce minor case study preparation to 1 week?	Yes	No
Introduce changes during day of the major case?	Yes	No

2. How would you rate the 'case study experience' out of 100%:

%

3. List the skills which you used during the case study:

4. Have you added / will you add the skills at (3) above to your CV / LinkedIn profile?

Yes

No (delete as appropriate)

5. Any comments on the case study would be most welcome:

Thank you, Year 4 Lecturers.

19 February 2019.

