

Case studies

Your reflective account [Fellow] must include one case study which demonstrates your professional impact and effectiveness across a range of the knowledge and activity criteria. (TEAP Handbook, p.25)

Your reflective account [Senior Fellow] must include two case studies which demonstrate your professional impact and effectiveness across a range of the knowledge and activity criteria. At least one of these case studies must involve your academic leadership.(TEAP Handbook, p.27)

An important methodology for university teaching across a wide variety of disciplines is the requirement to link theoretical concepts (academic ideas) to real world situations or cases. A case has been defined by Yin (2009) as ‘a bounded phenomenon in its natural setting’, where the boundaries are determined by the framework for the analysis or the research questions of a study.¹ Case study analysis enables students to classify real-world problems or issues in their field and suggest principled ways to address these. Case studies are particularly valuable for enabling students to demonstrate their understanding of concepts. They are also an important research methodology for an in-depth exploration of a particular context.

It is, therefore, essential for EAP professionals to show that they understand how case studies are used in university teaching and research. They can do this by providing a case study description of their own practice linked to the relevant TEAP competency statements

Evidence provided by a candidate

A typical case study involves the review of an academic course or module with a rationale for any proposed changes. A recent example for a Fellow application involved the review of an EGAP course on a pre-session programme for students from a variety of disciplines expecting to progress to masters level study. The case study was divided into four sections in which the syllabus, assessments and online delivery were related to best practice in the literature to support the rationale for proposed changes. Each of these sections contained links to evidence on a Padlet (online noticeboard) The final section used an analysis of student language needs to support the introduction of a new component of the course, Academic Language Workshops.

It should be noted that this kind of analysis can provide evidence of competence without the resulting revisions needing to be implemented. However, the evidence should be sufficient for the assessor to see what impact the revisions might have. The case study

¹ Yin, R.K. (2009) Case Study Research. Design and Methods. 3rd Edition. Sage Publications.

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should be clearly separated from the remainder of the RAPP. Assessor feedback for this and a similar case is shown below:



The British Association of Lecturers
in English for Academic Purposes

Feedback from assessors:

It is not completely clear exactly what changes were made to the content of the syllabus in the case study. Your rationale for making the changes is clear but you present three different syllabus documents and leave it to the assessor to identify the extent and detail of the content changes you made. Your RAPP gives some examples of the changes and their impact, e.g. 'I incorporated more scaffolding'; 'providing lectures as online Stream videos with transcripts accelerated my transition to more inclusive practices' but you don't say how scaffolding was different before your intervention or in what way these videos made teaching more inclusive.

The focus of the case study is not altogether clear as it appears to merge into the more general comments on teaching, assessment and professional development. It would be helpful to have a brief overview of the case study [...] in the introduction and the related assessment described alongside it. We feel it would be helpful for you to restructure your RAPP, making it obvious what the specific focus of the Case Study is and where it begins and ends.

Task Choose a module you have taught on an academic preparation (pre-sessional) or academic support (in-sessional) course. Analyse the syllabus, course content and assessments in a way that shows you understand the principles of constructive alignment (Biggs & Tang, 2011).² Suggest some changes that could improve the module for a particular group of students. How many of the competencies could you evidence with this analysis?

Examples of case studies

Task Study the following section titles for case studies from Fellow and Senior Fellow applicants. What boundaries would define the limits of each case and what would the candidate need to include in their case description?

Academic Leadership: Supporting and mentoring colleagues

Needs analysis for a new subject-specific EAP course

Design and delivery of a course for an overseas partner

Using an online tool to support transitioning from face to face to online teaching

Exploring academic practices in a Content & Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) course

² Teaching for Quality Learning at University. By John B. Biggs and Catherine Tang. New York, N.Y.: McGraw-Hill/Society for Research into Higher Education/Open University Press, 2011

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Supporting the assessment literacy and use of formative assessment amongst [Centre] students and staff and beyond.



Examples of case studies – suggested responses

Boundaries are suggested that would define the limits of each case and with ideas about what would need to be included in the case description. These are indicative responses.

Academic Leadership: Supporting and mentoring colleagues

Boundaries: a group of colleagues line managed directly by the candidate

Case description: context, team working issues, performance monitoring, team & individual development, academic development of staff, routes for promotion

Needs analysis for a new subject-specific EAP course

Boundaries: a named module or course

Case description: needs analysis with subject colleagues, specification of learning outcomes, syllabus design, content & assessment with constructive alignment

Using an online tool to support transitioning from face to face to online teaching

Boundaries: named digital tool with rationale for use in specific context

Case description: demands of wider context (e.g. Covid) needs analysis of staff digital competence, scaffolding of tool use, staff workshops, troubleshooting

Exploring academic practices in a Content & Language Integrated Learning (CLiL) course

Boundaries: a named module or course

Case description: Rationale for delivering CLiL course in context, identifying appropriate academic practices in theory & practice

Supporting the assessment literacy and use of formative assessment amongst [Centre] students and staff and beyond.

Boundaries: assessment practices (formative) in a centre

Case description: needs analysis of staff & students beliefs about formative assessment, specific roles held & changes implemented in formative assessment

Problems with case studies

Your RAPP lacks balance as Case Study 1 [...] has just over 1,000 words whereas Case Study 2 [...] has less than 500 words.

Your case study is short and lacks supporting evidence

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Your case studies are comprehensive. However, you also need to submit a RAPP that details elements of your practice beyond these specific cases. We need to see some breadth to the work you do.

