

## FROM GRADING TO REVIEWING: PROVIDING MEANINGFUL FEEDBACK IN A CASE-BASED MBA MARKETING COURSE

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### ABSTRACT

This paper illustrates a course design that combines both student and instructor feedback for case analyses in an MBA marketing strategy course. It provides step-by-step instructions on how to make case analysis and student-to-student evaluations into a more enriching learning experience. The suggested procedure stresses the quality rather than the quantity method of grading, and it highlights the importance of sharing student feedback with the entire class. The structure of the course makes it possible to present and discuss more cases in a semester while grading a much smaller number of case reports.

The course grading methodology offers many benefits. It simultaneously minimizes the overall amount of instructor grading while maximizing the depth of feedback provided to students. The focus shifts from 'grading' case studies with the proverbial red pen markings in the margins, to 'reviewing' student group cases and presentations and providing written reviews similar to ones that might be prepared for a paper submitted to a journal or conference.

Samples of these reviews are presented not only within the context of this manuscript, but also in the marketing classroom itself. This provides students with the opportunity to see and learn from the work of their peers. Incorporating critiques of student papers into the lectures effectively transforms the course from a lecture/discussion into a case-based graduate seminar.

The text used is Kerin and Peterson's *Strategic Marketing Problems, Cases and Comments*. The text contains nearly 50 cases on a variety of marketing topics. Of particular emphasis are the financial aspects of marketing, as each case includes detailed sales and financial data for the students to analyze.

The class, with enrollment between 24 and 32 students, is divided into eight groups of three to four students. Over the course of a 16-week semester,

24 cases are presented and discussed in class, beginning week three. In each class meeting, two cases are formally presented. Thus, two groups make formal presentations and submit formal case analyses. Two of the remaining six groups are required to write an individual single-page discussion brief (each group is assigned to one of the presented cases). These students are expected to question the presenting groups and to evaluate the presentations.

A detailed instructor case review process is included, and samples of two reviews are provided. The written review typically begins by pointing out the positive aspects of the group's analysis. The focus is placed on the group's demonstrated ability to identify important elements of the case as well as their ability to bring forth insightful observations and conclusions.

Next, the focus shifts to the technical aspects of the analysis. The students' work is compared closely with the technical information presented in the teaching note. At this point in the grading process, it can often be determined where students' assumptions or calculations deviate from the correct analysis provided in the teaching note. It is here that the instructor can provide a critique of the reasoning of the group based on its (often incorrect) assumptions and or calculations.

The final part of the review process concerns the critique of the presentation itself. Typically, four to eight students evaluate the presentation using the rating scale provided in the paper.

### References Available on Request