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## Article

# Developing case writing in smaller universities

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# Developing Case Writing in Smaller Universities

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**Abstract:** Study programmes in economics and management should be more focused on developing students' critical thinking skills and the capabilities to solve practical problems. Case method is admittedly one of the best techniques to accomplish these goals. Thus, disseminating the benefits of case method in academic teaching as well as supporting case writing among scholars is of great importance. Despite the many proven benefits of the case method and the growing use of cases in teaching management and economics, it seems that the writing of cases is undertaken by not so many academics. There is evidence of the lack of support at smaller schools to potential case writers from administrators, in terms of motivation, recognition, training, time, and funding, and on the other hand, there is little awareness among faculty about international scholarships, available peer-reviewed publishing opportunities for cases, and peer support via international case conferences. This paper attempts to fill in the existing information gap and offer helpful guidance to faculty and school administrators.

**Aim:** The aim of this paper is to support the development of case writing in the management and economics subjects by faculty of smaller universities where typically the local peer support is limited or non-existent, while the value of such academic research activity may be underestimated by school deans. The paper offers practical guidance on how to get international support while developing teaching cases.

**Design / Research methods:** This paper is a policy analysis type of research. It is based on secondary sources as well as primary sources such as personal observations and experience of the author who has been teaching finance and business since 1995, has published the first case in 2015, has authored 10+ cases by early 2022, has received 3 international case writing awards, and has been elected to the Board of NACRA, the leading case research association in the U.S.

**Conclusions / findings:** The use of case method in teaching management and economics has multiple benefits, including its virtuous role in school accreditations and industry-academia collaboration, as well as its powerful boost to the professional development of faculty. Faculty involvement however will remain limited unless the school deans and the accrediting bodies apply proper motivation to support academic case writing. The paper lists specific policy recommendations for promoting case research and case writing, which are feasible to implement in small universities with a limited budget.

**Originality / value of the article:** There are currently no papers that present such an overview of the current academic case writing scene, case conferences, funding, peer-reviewed case publication opportunities, as prepared by the author based on the personal experience as finance professor and case writer. It is a unique and valuable practical guidance for faculty members who are looking to get involved in case writing or for deans who are thinking of feasible measures to promote case writing and case research by tapping into the existing global resources and opportunities.

*Keywords: case method, peer-reviewed case journals, case research conferences, case writing workshops, scholarships for new case writers, case research associations, NACRA, The Case Centre, rankings of case journals*

*JEL: A21, A22, A23*

## 1. Introduction

Study programmes in economics and management should be more focused on developing students' critical thinking skills and the capabilities to solve practical problems. Case method is admittedly one of the best techniques for delivering real life learning into the management classroom. Prominent educators such as Dr Johan Roos, the Chief Strategy Officer at Hult International Business School, previously President of Copenhagen Business School and Dean of the Stockholm School of Economics, spoke passionately about the need of transformation in today's business education: "We need to merge business experience and academia far more than now. Too much emphasis is now placed on theory vs. practice, ensuring that graduates are unprepared to deal with the complex problems of the world that companies inhabit. They lack meaningful, relevant business education that teaches them cross-disciplinary thinking, broad familiarity with humanistic and scientific trends, and, most importantly, Aristotle's "phronesis" – the practical wisdom that teaches them to make decisions based on deep notions of what is good for the global community of which businesses are part." (Roos 2014).

Thus, disseminating the benefits of case method in academic teaching as well as supporting case writing among scholars is of great importance. Despite the many proven benefits of the case method and the growing use of cases in teaching management and economics, it seems that the writing of cases is undertaken by not so many academics. There is evidence of the lack of support at smaller schools to potential case writers from administrators, in terms of motivation, recognition, training, time, and funding, and on the other hand, there is little awareness among

faculty about international scholarships, available peer-reviewed publishing opportunities for cases, and peer support via international case conferences.

The aim of this paper is to support the development of case writing in the management and economics subjects by faculty of smaller universities where typically the peer support is limited or even non-existent, while the value of such academic research activity may be underestimated by school deans. The paper offers practical guidance on how to get international support while developing teaching cases.

This paper is a policy analysis type of research. It is based on secondary sources as well as primary sources such as personal observations of the author who has been teaching finance and business since 1995, has published the first case in 2015, has authored 10+ cases by early 2022, has received 3 international case writing awards, and has been elected to the Board of NACRA, the leading case research association in the U.S. The author also conducted many informal interviews with academic colleagues.

The paper summarises for faculty and deans the benefits of academic case writing, including its virtuous role in school accreditations and industry-academia collaboration, as well as its powerful boost to the professional development of faculty. It lists specific policy recommendations for deans for promoting case research and case writing, which are feasible to implement in small universities with a limited budget. There are currently no papers that present such an overview of the current academic case writing scene, case conferences, funding and publication opportunities as prepared by the author based on the personal experience as finance professor and case writer. It is a unique and valuable practical guidance for faculty members who are looking to get involved in case writing or for deans who are thinking of feasible measures to promote case writing and case research.

The rest of this paper is structured as follows. Section 2 explains the essence of the case method and lists its benefits. Section 3 describes in brief the science and the art of writing effective teaching cases. Figure 1 in this section answers the question “What makes a good case?” Section 4 discusses the typical obstacles that faculty may face when it comes to case writing. Section 5 presents the model of Harvard Business School and discusses the role of case research within a university. Since the deans of

the vast majority of small universities in Europe (and elsewhere) often feel constricted in terms of budget to create a dedicated local case center, the paper – in section 6 – offers alternative ways for helping the faculty to get involved in case writing by using the support of the existing global peer network. The paper gives information about such key organisations as The Case Centre, regional case centers (listed in Appendix A), and NACRA and its affiliates (listed in Table 1). Section 7 analyses the current approaches to how the case publications are valued and recognized, suggesting a recommended assessment scale in Table 2. Final conclusions and policy recommendations to deans are provided in section 8.

## **2. Case method: definition and benefits**

A case, or a case study, is “a teaching vehicle that presents students with a critical management issue and serves as a springboard to lively classroom debate in which participants present and defend their analysis and prescriptions” (HBS Case Development, n.d.). A ‘proper’ case (or case study) is always based on real events in a real organization – as opposed to a textbook exercise which is typically a realistic yet a fictional example. Of course, some cases may disguise the name of the company or the individuals; this may be done for various reasons. With cases, students learn from real life experience – which is highly important and highly needed in today’s complex and dynamic business environment where students find themselves upon graduation.

There are two types of cases intended for classroom teaching: decision cases and descriptive cases. In a ‘decision case’ the student is placed in the manager's position and is asked to analyse a business dilemma and recommend a decision. HBS refers to such cases as ‘field cases.’ A ‘descriptive case’, otherwise also called a ‘case study’, is a description of a real situation. HBS calls them ‘library cases.’ A ‘descriptive case’ will require the student to evaluate the situation and determine if there was a more effective way to handle it.

Both types of cases are of high learning value since they help students develop critical thinking abilities and decision-making skills. Indeed, judgment and experience

are at the core of managerial success, so it is important that students are confronted with real-life cases, where they can practice those skills. The students' learning process is set via the instructor's manual / teaching note, which forms an essential part of a case and is more important in fact than the case itself when it comes to publishing in a peer-reviewed case journal.

The former Dean of Harvard Business School, the pioneer of the case method, writes in his recent article: "Cases teach students how to apply theory in practice and how to induce theory from practice. The case method cultivates the capacity for critical analysis, judgment, decision-making, and action." In his decade as the dean, he had many conversations with the alumni and kept asking his favorite question: "What was the most important thing you learned from your time in our MBA program?" He writes: "Alumni responses varied but tended to follow a pattern. Almost no one referred to a specific business concept they learned. Many mentioned close friendships or the classmate who became a business or life partner. Most often, though, alumni highlighted a personal quality or skill such as 'increased self-confidence' or 'the ability to advocate for a point of view' or 'knowing how to work closely with others to solve problems.' And when I asked how they developed these capabilities, they inevitably mentioned the magic of the case method." (Nohria 2021).

Nohria uses the word "meta-skills" to capture the broader set of capabilities that the HBS alumni reported they learned from the case method. Meta-skills are defined as a group of long-lasting abilities that allow someone to learn new things more quickly. Nohria lists seven meta-skills that the case method develops in students: 1) preparation, 2) discernment, 3) bias recognition, 4) judgement, 5) collaboration, 6) curiosity, 7) self-confidence.

Many universities and business schools across the globe have established their own case research centers. In explaining their mission, they highlight three robust benefits of the case method:

1) cases are a powerful real-life learning tool for students, hence better employability prospects after graduation,

2) case writing is an efficient engagement mechanism to build relationships with local companies, hence a more diversified academic programme, enriched by practical activities, and ultimately, better employability prospects for students,

3) case writing is an important development tool for faculty which helps them get involved in applied research, hence a better research profile of the school, which in turn boosts the school's rankings and facilitates the academic accreditation process, and all these ultimately ensure, once again, better employability prospects for students.

A 2021 editorial in the *Journal of Marketing* by Deighton, Mela, and Moorman presented strong arguments for linking marketing “thinking and doing” through writing cases as well as other formats of industry-academia collaborations. The authors made a robust case for a “better weave between marketing practice and scholarship.” They wrote: “Published academic papers that are not translated for practice are like the proverbial tree falling in the woods. Many outlets can help translation, including practitioner conferences, professional journals, letters to the editor, book writing, and case writing; many academics are fortunate to have the support of professional staff members who facilitate this translation process. For those less fortunate, we encourage business schools to make this investment. The strategy pays off for academics because exposure improves collaboration opportunities, which, in turn, may lead to better data and research ideas.”

The 2022 winner of the Case Centre's “Outstanding Case Teacher Annual Competition” Nuno Fernandes, Professor of Financial Management at IESE Business School, commented the following on the benefits of case method: “For me, there are three important aspects of teaching with cases. First, they raise action and emotional levels. I believe that, in order for learning to stick, we need to go way beyond content. By placing participants in decision mode, it becomes real, and allows us to move from pure ‘content delivery’ to knowledge and insights. Second, I love teaching my own cases. When you have studied or worked with the company, and then teach a case, it is extremely stimulating. You can often enrich the class with your real-world experience, allowing for a richer discussion of important life topics or dilemmas. Finally, cases allow for integration, and flexibility. Finance does not have to be complex, or boring, and it is actually very suitable for case teaching. In addition, this allows students to integrate across different disciplines, while developing critical thinking skills. Recruiters around the world seek people with technical skills, but also

with communication skills, critical thinking, and the ability to work in teams. I try to incorporate these different elements in my cases and courses.”

Case writing is not limited to telling the story itself, but also requires that the professor creates a teaching note where she or he defines the expected learning outcomes and explains how the case should be used in class. International peer-reviewed case journals require the teaching note to be based on research. Indeed, as the accrediting body AACSB stresses, “research is central to quality management education.” In fact, it is the quality of the teaching note and the fact that the teaching note is well grounded in research that are the determinant factors of the case to be published in peer-reviewed case journals. The teaching notes are not published for wide distribution, they are only available to authorized instructors. Teaching notes are particularly helpful to faculty members who are at the beginning of their teaching careers. Teaching notes are valuable pedagogical vehicles which allow the experienced case teachers disseminate their knowledge of using specific cases in the classroom and share best pedagogical practices.

### **3. What makes a “good” case?**

There is both science and art behind writing effective teaching cases. To learn the science, the first recommended step for a faculty member who is new to case writing is to access the relevant resources available from the organisations devoted to disseminating the case method. Their list is presented further in this paper. The leading global distributor – The Case Centre – publishes helpful instructions for new authors: <https://www.thecasecentre.org/submission/guidelines/requirements>, while NACRA and other academic associations publish sample cases and sample teaching notes, e.g. <https://nacra.net/conference/submission-details-and-instructions/>. They also publish articles or guides on how to start writing cases, how to develop the story and the description of protagonists, how to work with a company and what permissions are needed for publication, how to choose learning objectives and how to create discussion questions: see for example the guide by The Case Centre <https://www.thecasecentre.org/caseWriting/guide>, NACRA resources for case



authors <https://nacra.net/case-research-journal/articles-on-cases/>, or this webinar by Ivey Publishing <https://www.iveypublishing.ca/s/news/key-insights-from-how-to-identify-a-business-case-organization-webinar-MCWAIVPOMKBJFXXMM5N2YRKPYLIQ> . Also see in references a recent book chapter on creating a teaching note by Ballesteros-Sola and Goldman.

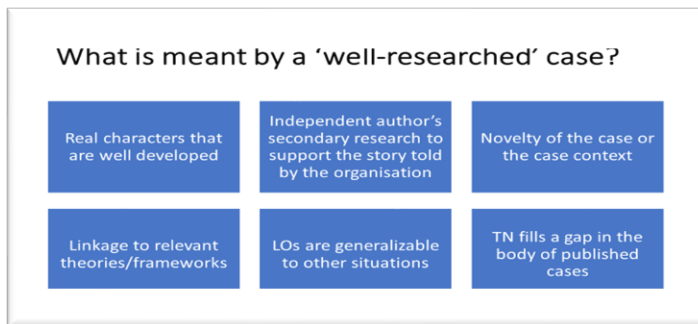
Learning the art of case writing comes with practicing it. To summarize what makes a ‘good’ case, I would suggest the following ‘mantra’: clear , well-researched, with rich opportunities for practical analysis. Figure 1-3 below illustrate what is meant by a ‘clear’ case, lists the features of a ‘well-researched’ case, and explains what we mean by ‘rich opportunities for practical analysis.’

**Figure 1. What makes a “clear” case?**



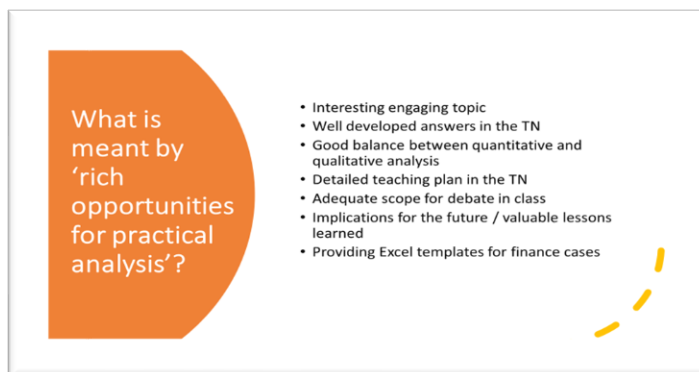
Source: author’s own elaboration

**Figure 2. What is meant by a “well-researched” case?**



Source: author's own elaboration

**Figure 3. What is meant by “rich opportunities”?**



Source: author's own elaboration

#### 4. Obstacles for faculty to get involved in case writing

Teaching management via case studies has indeed become a well-established practice at many business schools. At such US institutions as Harvard Business School and Darden School of Business, which are the leaders in the case-teaching method, 75-80 percent of class time is spent on case studies (Levy 2015). In most European universities, this percentage is much lower, and it varies dramatically

depending on the course subject. While it is hard to imagine a modern Marketing or Strategy class without the use of cases, the percentage of class time used on cases in quantitative subjects, such as Economics, Finance, and Accounting, seems to be considerably lower. Nevertheless, it can be stated with certainty that instructors of quantitative courses are using cases in their teaching as well. It has become a good practice to use lectures to present theory and to use case studies as follow-up assignments.

HBS produces around 350 new cases each year, which is about 80% of all cases sold throughout the world. However, less than half of the cases produced by HBS are international, and most of those are based on companies from China or India. Students in Europe want to learn not only from US-based cases, but from European cases too. Moreover, it makes a huge difference when students are taught via the story about a local company. There is a strong need in the academic community to generate new cases which refer to non-US companies.

Despite the well-documented advantages of the case method in teaching management and economics, it is evident that the writing of cases is undertaken by not so many academics. From our experience, the faculty, especially at smaller universities, face several obstacles when it comes to case writing:

- low level of recognition from peers, accreditation bodies, and administrators for case research and case writing activity whereas cases often do not count as ‘research’ for tenure and promotion purposes;
- lack of support within smaller schools, in terms of motivation, training, and funding available;
- lack of time for case writing activity since academics have been handling an increasing pressure to deliver ‘traditional’ research publications to secure their tenure track positions and at the same time excel at teaching (and the latter has required many more hours invested by faculty over the last two years of the Covid-19 pandemic due to the need to transform the face-to-face lessons into online or hybrid formats);
- lack of awareness among European faculty and school deans about publication opportunities for cases besides The Case Centre, especially about international peer-reviewed case journals;

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- lack of ratings for peer-reviewed case journals;
- very few peer-reviewed case research publication venues in Europe;
- lack of personal incentives in case writing since The Case Centre pays royalties to the organisations who are its members and not to individual authors;
- lack of awareness among faculty and school deans about the global support network for academic case writers, and specifically no awareness in Europe of the existing peer-reviewed case conferences as well as international scholarships for new case writers among PhD students and young faculty;
- no peer-reviewed case conference in Europe and no academic case research association in Europe;
- very few of the management and economics conferences accept teaching cases for presentation;
- in many European countries, unwillingness of companies to participate and share information, especially when it concerns financial information;
- in emerging markets, limited access to protagonists/organizations. Colleagues in India often mention that they don't have relationships with alumni, and don't have relationships with industry - and therefore are constrained to do secondary-sourced cases (mainly from media articles).

Are there ways to overcome these obstacles? I strongly believe that yes, there are, at least for some of the obstacles, and I envision two immediate feasible actions as follows:

- 1) Educating school deans and accrediting bodies about the value of case publications and their substantial contribution to the school's reputation, students' employability prospects, local community engagement, and the diversification and improvement of the research portfolio of the school.
- 2) Educating faculty and school administrators about the existing peer support network for case writers, including case research academic associations, case writing conferences, international scholarship opportunities for new case writers, global case writing awards, peer-reviewed case journals.

I explain these actions further below.

## 5. Role of case research within an academic institution

For the role of case research within a higher education institution, the Harvard Business School model stands out. “At HBS, academic research and case development are connected and mutually reinforcing. Cases provide the opportunity for faculty to assess and develop ideas, spark insights on nascent research questions early in a project, illustrate theory in practice, and get feedback in the classroom on those very concepts. In addition, case writing provides faculty a means to collaborate and to develop research ideas both across disciplines and across institutions” (HBS Case Development, n.d.). HBS makes an effort to entice companies to collaborate with the HBS faculty; it has created the Case Studies for Harvard Business School brochure (Shapiro 2016) as a helpful resource to organizations interested in working with the School on a case. According to the HBS Publications web site, field cases typically take two months to complete – from obtaining a host organization’s approval to move forward on a case, to conducting onsite interviews, and drafting a case that paints a picture of the management issue and provides a mix of real-world uncertainty and information required for decision-making analysis. Two months is a very short period, which undoubtedly contributes to the popularity of the HBS collection where an instructor may find cases on a variety of ‘fresh’ events.

How is it possible to produce cases so fast? Exceptional case-writing support is available to HBS faculty. Support is provided by case writers who work as individual research associates or are available on a project by project basis through the on-campus Case Research and Writing Group and eight regional research centers (Asia-Pacific, California, Europe, India, Japan, Latin America, Harvard Center Shanghai, and Istanbul). Baker Library’s extensive business collection and specialist librarians comprise another invaluable research and case-writing resource.

Many large European business schools have taken the opportunity and created their own case collections – advancing their reputation and ranking position. Many schools took the opportunity and created their own case collections under the umbrella of The Case Centre: e.g. in Europe ESSEC <https://www.thecasecentre.org/caseCollection/ESSECBusinessSchool>, or IMD,

London Business School, INSEAD, to name a few. But many schools now host their case collections at their own websites, e.g. IMD <https://www.imd.org/research-knowledge/case-studies/case-collections/>, LBS <https://publishing.london.edu/>, INSEAD <https://publishing.insead.edu/search>.

Many large universities in developing countries have initiated the local case research centers in the last decade. The business schools in these countries have responded to the demand for local cases which HBS cannot provide. Appendix A provides a sample list of the regional case centers outside the US and Europe.

The deans of the vast majority of small universities in Europe (and elsewhere) often feel constricted in terms of budget to create a dedicated local case center. And of course duplicating the HBS model is not a feasible option. This should not become an obstacle however to encouraging faculty to get involved in case writing by using the support of the global peer network.

## **6. Peer support network for academic case writers**

### **6.1. The Case Centre**

The key organization that promotes the case method in Europe as well as globally is The Case Centre, <https://www.thecasecentre.org/> (formerly European Case Clearing House). The Case Centre by now has accumulated the largest worldwide collection of cases (with the HBS' collection as a big part of it). The Case Centre was founded in 1973 as the Case Clearing House of Great Britain and Ireland. It was the result of a joint initiative by 22 higher education institutions who wanted a reliable facility for sharing case materials among business teachers. From 1991 up till 2013, it was known as the European Case Clearing House (or ECCH). As of 2022, The Case Centre has more than 500 members spread across many countries. The Case Centre has defined its mission as “advancing the case method worldwide, sharing knowledge, wisdom and experience to inspire and transform business education across the globe.” It is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity. It has its main office at the Cranfield University in the UK, and from 1992 it established a US office at Babson College, Massachusetts.

As of January 2022, The Case Centre had 69,200+ cases in its collection, with 7,400 cases also available in other language than English. Any independent author can submit a case, while also an organisation can create its own case collection within The Case Centre. Authors need to satisfy certain requirements for the case to be published, like for example, the case needs to have been taught in class at least twice. The requirements of The Case Centre do not imply peer-review of the content of the case. Thus, the publication process is quick (not more than a month).

From 2019, a new publication opportunity for academics is offered by The Case Centre's "Case Focus Journal" which is a new peer-reviewed academic journal for high-quality teaching cases. I will discuss later in this paper the peer-reviewed case journals and will comment on the academic recognition of such publications.

The Case Centre has been very active in promoting the case method via case teaching seminars, case writing workshops, annual case writing and case teaching competitions, and more recently, via case scholarships.

The Case Centre organizes annual international case writing and case teaching competitions since 1991 <https://www.thecasecentre.org/AwardsComps/about>. These prestigious awards celebrate worldwide excellence in case writing and teaching and are now considered the case method community's annual "Oscars". The Case Centre also provides information on its website on other case writing competitions globally (such as offered by EFMD or other organisations <https://www.thecasecentre.org/caseWriting/competitions> ).

The case scholarship package includes financial support of £1,000 (\$1,200, €1,150) and a free place on a case writing workshop by experts from The Case Centre.

Unpublished case writers who are faculty members or PhD students with teaching responsibilities qualify to apply. Scholarship teams share the financial award and send one member of their team on the free case writing workshop. The scholarships are assigned four times a year: <https://www.thecasecentre.org/caseWriting/scholarships/default>.

## 6.2. NACRA and other academic case research associations

Currently, the leading case writing *academic* associations are predominantly based in the US, of which the largest is the North American Case Research Association, NACRA. In my experience, it is currently one of few case associations with an expanding global reach in terms of membership. Other academic case associations based in the North and South America seem to maintain more of a regional focus, although their conferences always welcome international participants. Many associations are affiliated with NACRA – see the full list in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. NACRA and its affiliates**

Name of academic case association	Website	Region
North American Case Research Association (NACRA)	<a href="https://www.nacra.net/">https://www.nacra.net/</a>	All states in the U.S. and international
Asociación Latinoamericana de Casos (ALAC)	<a href="http://cic.tec.mx/alac/">http://cic.tec.mx/alac/</a>	Latin American countries
Canada Administrative Sciences Association of Canada (ASAC)	<a href="http://www.asac.ca/">http://www.asac.ca/</a>	Canada
The Case Association (CASE)	<a href="https://www.caseweb.org/">https://www.caseweb.org/</a>	East coast of the U.S.
Caribbean Case Researchers Association (CCRA)	<a href="http://utechja-ccra.com/">http://utechja-ccra.com/</a>	Caribbean countries
International Case Research Association (ICRA)	<a href="http://caseresearch.org">http://caseresearch.org</a>	International
Society for Case Research (SCR)	<a href="https://www.sfcr.org/">https://www.sfcr.org/</a>	Midwest of the U.S.
Southeast Case Research Association (SECRA)	<a href="http://www.secra.org/">http://www.secra.org/</a>	Southeast coast of the U.S.
Southwest Case Research Association (SWCRA)	<a href="http://swcra.net/">http://swcra.net/</a>	Southwest coast of the U.S.
Western Casewriters Association (WCA)	<a href="http://www.westerncasewriters.org/">http://www.westerncasewriters.org/</a>	West coast of the U.S.

Source: <https://www.nacra.net/about-nacra/affiliated-organizations/> [11.06.2022].

The two main activities of academic case research associations are to provide peer support via regular case conferences and workshops, and to publish peer-reviewed case journals. I have put together the descriptions of the main activities of the leading



case research associations and the publication opportunities that they offer to academics.

- **NACRA (*North American Case Research Association*)** – recognized as top leader globally in academic case writing.

“Mission Statement. The North American Case Research Association (NACRA) is a nonprofit, voluntary professional association whose mission is to promote excellence in case research, writing, and teaching in business and other academic disciplines. We seek to accomplish our mission through a set of interrelated activities, including the following:

- Sponsoring an annual meeting for the presentation and improvement of new, peer-reviewed cases and papers on issues related to case pedagogy;
- Publishing a quarterly peer-reviewed journal, the Case Research Journal, the premier journal for outstanding teaching cases grounded in research;
- Promoting the worldwide distribution and use of NACRA cases in multiple media throughout the world;
- Providing professional development seminars and activities aimed at enhancing skills in case research, writing, and teaching;
- Working to enhance the legitimacy and status of case research and pedagogy within academic institutions and professional associations; and
- Supporting the work of NACRA-affiliated regional organizations and collaborating with other professional organizations having complementary objectives.”

NACRA has around 300 members. The association’s annual conference takes place in early October, at various locations across the U.S. or Canada. This conference is the top global academic event for field researched cases, and the conference tracks accept also cases based on secondary sources. The conference begins on a Thursday morning – hosting the Start-up Cases Workshop for participants who are new to case writing, and who have not prepared a fully developed case suitable for a round table submission, but instead submitted a short preliminary draft of a potential case. NACRA’s experienced mentors host this training workshop.

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Over the next two days, the conference hosts case discussions in the format of small round tables by academic discipline (= track). Currently, there are 10+ tracks at the NACRA conference. Many tracks have more than one round table. The small friendly format of the peer discussions is a unique feature of NACRA. For round tables, faculty members have submitted their fully developed cases for peer review, and they receive detailed feedback on their case during the round table discussions at the conference. This peer review process that takes place during the NACRA conference is exceptionally helpful for case writers to improve their specific case and properly prepare it for a journal submission. The round tables at NACRA are organized in such a way so as to have two discussants for each case as well as to invite comments from all participants of each round table (usually about 6-10 participants for each round table).

While the round tables by tracks take place on the two mornings, Friday and Saturday, NACRA conference also hosts various workshops, seminars and activities in the afternoons and evenings. Prominent speakers are invited to the NACRA conference, such as e.g. Michael Porter in 2005 who provided strong rationale for case research in his speech at the conference. A very useful session at NACRA conference is hosted by case journals editors where they explain the mission of each journal and the requirements for authors. The CASE Journal, EMCS, Ivey Publishing, and The Case Centre are typical participants of this session at NACRA, along with other case publishers. Upon closing of the conference, at the Saturday lunch, the conference presents case writing awards to participating authors; there are more than ten different categories, e.g. Best Case (Bronze, Silver, and Gold Awards), or 'Best Case in Accounting, Finance and Economics,' etc.

Importantly, NACRA conference offers additional special seminars for the fellows of the Paul R. Lawrence Fellowship Program sponsored by the Case Research Foundation. This program was initiated in 2015 and became an important source of funding for case writing for junior faculty. This program provides scholarships to doctoral students and junior faculty in the first three years of a tenure-track or equivalent appointment to be trained in case research, writing, and teaching at the annual conference of NACRA. The scholarships are announced in January each year, and the submission deadline is usually in early April.

NACRA publishes “Case Research Journal” since 1980; it has double-blind peer review and a 15-20 percent acceptance rate. The focus of the CRJ is on field-researched cases, but recently the journal began publishing also cases based on secondary research. The peer review process at CRJ is very efficient and prompt: the editor is committed to keep the target time frame from submission to author feedback for each version at 60 days. Most submissions require at least one round of revision before acceptance and it is common for accepted cases to go through two or more rounds of revisions. The publication process thus takes about 6-8 months.

The CRJ has the broadest distribution of any peer-reviewed case journal. The list of distributors includes the market leader Harvard Business Publishing, where the CRJ is currently the only peer-reviewed case journal included in its database. The CRJ is included in the Cabell’s Directory. NACRA’s case collection is also available via The Case Centre. Annually, there are over 50,000 adoptions of CRJ cases through the distribution partners. NACRA members who have published cases in the CRJ are provided with information about the number of adoptions of their specific cases along with their annual royalty statements. NACRA pays royalties to individual authors.

- ***The CASE Association***

The CASE Association (CASE, formerly known as the Eastern Case Writers’ Association) is an affiliate of the North American Case Association (NACRA) and meets annually in May in conjunction with the Eastern Academy of Management (EAM).

Their peer-reviewed online journal “The CASE Journal” (<https://www.caseweb.org/the-case-journal/>), pioneered in 2004, publishes cases based on either field-research or secondary sources. It is published in cooperation with Emerald Publishing, UK <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/tcj> . The publication process in this journal is from 6 to 15 months. “The CASE Journal” is included in the SCOPUS list as well as the Cabell’s Directory of peer-reviewed journals. Same as CRJ, it pays royalties to case authors who are members of the CASE Association.

Emerald Publishing also has another peer-reviewed case journal – “Emerging Markets Case Studies” (<https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/journal/emcs>), which is listed in SCOPUS as well as the Cabell’s Directory.

Both TCJ and EMCS are international journals that publish cases from various countries across the globe. Their case collection can be found at <https://www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/explore-our-content/case-studies/discover-our-ecase-collections>.

- ***SFCR (Society for Case Research)***

Founded in 1978 in the USA, SFCR publishes three academic journals: “Business Case Journal” (two issues per year), “Journal of Case Studies” (two issues per year) and “Journal of Critical Incidents” (one issue per year). These journals do not pay royalties to authors.

“Business Case Journal” has triple-blind peer review, around 10 percent acceptance rate, cases need to be tested in the classroom. Historically, the “Business Case Journal” has focused on decision cases based on field research. “Journal of Case Studies” has double-blind peer review, around 20 percent acceptance rate, and accepts descriptive case studies or decision cases based on secondary sources, well grounded in research. The publication process in both of these journals is between 12 and 24 months. “Journal of Critical Incidents” is a journal for short cases up to 3 pages long, it has double-blind peer review. The publication process in this journal is 11-12 months. All three journals published by the SFCR are included in the Cabell’s Directory.

SFCR organizes two annual academic conferences. One conference runs in March/April in Chicago (it is part of the bigger MBAA conference <https://mbaainternational.org/>) and the second one is the smaller Summer Workshop by SFCR (every July) in various locations in the US.

I further list some other case research associations which are not affiliated with NACRA.

- **WACRA (The World Association for Case Method Research & Application)**, <http://www.wacra.org/>

Founded in 1984, the World Association for Case Method Research & Case Method Application (WACRA®) evolved from contacts of professors, researchers, policy-makers, professionals, and business executives into a worldwide interdisciplinary organization. WACRA publishes “International Journal of Case Method Research & Application”, which solicits and welcomes research across the

entire range of topics encompassing the domain of case method research and application and interactive teaching methodologies. The journal's scope includes case writing and interactive teaching and learning, continuing and distance education that cross national, cultural, and disciplinary boundaries. The journal is included in the Cabell's Directory.

- Institute of Finance Case Research, <http://www.jfcr.org/>

Institute of Finance Case Research is a non-profit organization dedicated to the production and dissemination of case teaching resources and instructional techniques in finance. The IFCR was founded in 1996. The organization publishes two academic journals: "Journal of Finance Case Research" (included in the ABDC list as C journal) and "Journal of Instructional Techniques in Finance". The publication process in this journal is from 12 to 24 months.

- Financial Education Association, <http://www.jfedweb.org/>

"FEA is a professional association of finance academicians devoted to collegiate financial education. FEA's mission is to enhance the quality of financial education and improve the collegiate financial education experience by encouraging educational research, curriculum development, creative pedagogy and professional development. FEA works to fulfill its mission through annual conferences with presentations of educational research, pedagogical papers, workshops and panel discussions and by fostering the dissemination of this research and pedagogy through «Journal of Financial Education» and «Advances in Financial Education»."

- "Case Focus Journal" by The Case Centre

As mentioned earlier, from 2019 a new publication opportunity for academics is offered by The Case Centre's "Case Focus Journal – the Journal of Business & Management Teaching Cases, Middle East and Africa Edition" (<https://www.thecasecentre.org/CaseFocus/default>). This is a new peer-reviewed academic journal for high-quality teaching cases, with a focus on management and business situations in the Middle East and Africa (MEA) region. The publication process takes about 8 months.

- Ivey Publishing, <https://www.iveypublishing.ca/s/publish/case-author-resources>

The Ivey Publishing in Canada is a top peer-reviewed global venue that publishes decision-focused cases based on secondary sources. It is in active collaboration with

NACRA – organizing joint workshops and participating in NACRA’s annual conference.

This section has focused on the case journals and the case research associations in the U.S. and Europe, and even so, it may have left out some existing publications and organisations.

### **7. Academic recognition for case writing**

Since usually the cases released by The Case Centre and regional case centers are not peer-reviewed, the case writing activity is perceived in many schools in Europe as an inferior type of academic research. The situation is somewhat different in the U.S. and Canada, where many academic case research associations have been formed, which specifically promote peer-reviewed case research. Putting your paper (be it a case accompanied by the teaching note or a regular scientific paper) through the peer-review process is a valuable professional development experience for faculty.

A key reason why peer-reviewed case research has been growing most actively in the U.S. is because the accreditation body AACSB recognizes case research as ‘research relating to instructional development’ (i.e., one of the three types of research by academics) and encourages universities to show different types of research in their faculty research portfolio. To quote Tim Mescon, Executive Vice President and Chief Officer, Europe, the Middle East, and Africa for AACSB International: “AACSB accreditation is usually a multi-year path that recognises institutions that demonstrate a focus on excellence in all areas, including teaching, research, curriculum development, and student learning. We can envisage the benefit of indicators such as getting credit for engaging with local businesses and producing relevant materials, which can both be expressed through cases.” (<https://www.thecasecentre.org/caseMethod/accreditation>).

One of the key questions that concerns academics is how the peer-reviewed case journals are ranked. Journal rankings are typically based on citations of articles, which do not apply to teaching cases. As such, most case journals do not appear on the journal ranking lists such as Harzing, ABDC, or ABS. These rankings are a proxy for

the impact of the articles. For cases, it is the impact from the distribution reach of the journal and the adoption of cases for classroom use that determines their ranking. As Grandy et al (2021) comment: “There is not a compelling reason for scholars to cite teaching cases in their research. As such, citation metrics, considered valid measures of quality and impact for traditional scholarly journals, are not valid indicators of impact or quality for journals that publish teaching cases. However, case adoption rate is a valid indicator of impact and quality for peer-reviewed teaching case journals. When an instructor adopts a case for use in their classroom, presumably they do so because they judge both the case and the IM to be of high quality. When the case is assigned and discussed, it has an impact on the future business leaders in that educator’s class. Thus, rate of case adoption should serve as an appropriate impact metric that is a reasonable alternative to citation counts. Cases published in the Case Research Journal, for example, are distributed through Harvard Business School Publishing, Ivey Publishing, The Case Center, Pearson Collections, McGraw Hill Create, StudyNet and CCMP, all of which report adoption statistics to the journal which are subsequently shared with authors. There are examples of cases published by the “Case Research Journal” that each has more than 5,000 adoptions in one year.”

A 2013 article in the “Academy of Management Learning and Education Journal (AMLE)”<sup>1</sup> provided rankings of journals with the content domain of management education based on reputation with active scholars. That ranking also included case journals, and for example, the “Case Research Journal” of NACRA was ranked N10, with a “B+” rating and 21.1% awareness among active scholars surveyed (Currie, Pandher 2013). None of the nine journals ranked above the CRJ are case journals. Some of the non-case journals on that list ranked below the CRJ are in fact ranked as “A” journals in the ABDC list.

Other case journals on the AMLE 2013 list are the “CASE Journal” of Emerald Publishing (with a “B” rating and 15.1% awareness), “International Journal of Case Method Research & Application” of WACRA (with a “B-” rating and 13.9% awareness), “Journal of Financial Education” (with a “B-” rating and 13.2% awareness), “Business Case Journal” of the Society for Case Research (with a “C”

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<sup>1</sup> AMLE itself was ranked in that list as N1, with an “A+” ranking and 41% awareness.

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rating and 12.3% awareness), “Asian Case Research Journal” (with a “C” rating and 12.3% awareness), and a few other journals of lower ranking.

The survey from the above article from AMLE is a decade old. It is not well known, and there has been no recent attempt to rank the current case journals. It is therefore of no surprise that the accrediting bodies and the school administrators have not developed clear guidelines on how to value case journal publications by the faculty. Table 2 below presents one such recommended assessment scale – developed by the author based on personal experience as well as interviews with academic colleagues in the global case writing community.

Some schools have defined broader industry impact in their mission and therefore include peer-reviewed published cases as part of their intellectual contribution/output. GIBS in South Africa (see Appendix A) is one example, with a case center, an internal case competition, and research rewards for case writers.



**Table 2. Assessment scale for faculty's case writing activities**

Type of activity	Journal/Venue	Recommended credit
Case published in a peer-reviewed case journal ranked as "B+" in the AMLE 2013 list	"Case Research Journal" (the only case journal distributed via Harvard Business Publishing)	Same as assigned for the publication of a 'regular' paper in a "B" peer-reviewed journal from the ABDC list or similar SCOPUS ranking
Case won in the global competition by The Case Centre	The Case Centre's Annual Case Writing Competitions	Same as assigned for the publication of a 'regular' paper in a "B" peer-reviewed journal from the ABDC list or similar SCOPUS ranking
Case published in a peer-reviewed case journal included in the Cabell's Directory – the White List of good journals	"CASE Journal", "Emerging Markets Case Studies", "Business Case Journal", "Asian Case Research Journal", "Journal of Case Studies", "Journal of Critical Incidents", "Case Focus Journal", "Journal of Finance Case Research", "International Journal of Case Method Research & Application", "Journal of Financial Education", "Ivey Publishing", etc.	Same as assigned for the publication of a 'regular' paper in a "C" peer-reviewed journal from the ABDC list or similar SCOPUS ranking
Case won in an international case writing competition	Annual Case Writing competitions by EFMD, NACRA, EMCS, etc.	Same as assigned for the publication of a 'regular' paper in a "C" peer-reviewed journal from the ABDC list or similar SCOPUS ranking
Case presented at a peer-reviewed case conference	Annual NACRA conference, MBAA conference or summer workshop by the SFCR, CASE Association conference or other conferences by NACRA's affiliates, see also Appendix A	Same as assigned for the presentation of a 'regular' paper at a peer-reviewed conference
Case published by a non-peer reviewed venue	The Case Centre, a textbook, a special collection, online such as via SSRN, school's course materials	Same as assigned for the publication of an article in a non-peer reviewed outlet
Participation in the case writing workshops (either as a learner or as the trainer)	Faculty training workshops, F2F or online, by The Case Centre or regional case centers (see Appendix A)	Same as assigned for other faculty development activity of similar length
International scholarship for case writing received	Case scholarship programmes by the Case Research Foundation (NACRA) or The Case Centre	Same as assigned for other similar awards/grants
Engagement in the academic case writing community	Acting as reviewer for case journals and case conferences, acting as editor of a case journal, acting as a case conference organiser, participation in the leadership roles in academic case research associations	Same as assigned for other similar academic activities

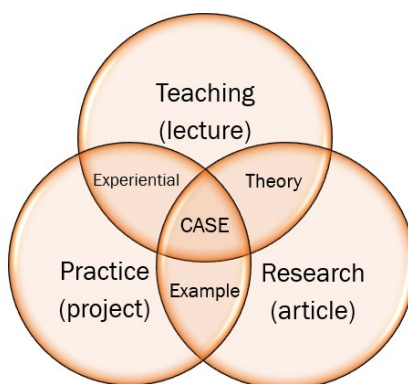
Source: author's own elaboration.

## 8. Conclusions

The need to promote case research and case writing is adamant. The benefits of case method are multiple. An emphasis on case research, teaching, and writing is well aligned with typical university strategic goals such as: - world-class research that is incorporated into pedagogy, excellence in learning and teaching, improving educational experience, increasing the university ranking status, improving students' employability, seeking closer cooperation with local businesses, fostering entrepreneurship, creating value in society in general.

Case research is strongly interconnected with applied research – having the same main objectives, i.e., the promotion of scholarship and education through teaching and research, and the enhancement of the cultural, social, and economic development. The research into actual company situations, which is required to develop a case, can provide data for testing hypotheses and facilitating theoretical insights, i.e., lead to the applied and basic research. To add to our earlier arguments and references in this paper, Greg Fisher in his *Business Horizons* editorial (2020) emphasizes the importance of writing cases and practitioner-focused articles by academics, increasing the relevance of scholarship for business stakeholders, and reinforcing the impact on teaching. As visualized by Eric Dolansky, Past President of NACRA, “cases form the intersection of research, teaching, and practice” – see Figure 4.

**Figure 4. Synthesizing Teaching, Practice, and Research**



Source: Dolansky (2022)

Supporting case writing among scholars is of great importance as it seems that the writing of cases is undertaken by a rather small number of academics. There is a lack of support at smaller universities to potential case writers, in terms of motivation, recognition, training, time, and funding, and on the other hand, there is little awareness among faculty about international case scholarships, available peer-reviewed publishing opportunities for cases, and peer support via international case conferences.

This paper has filled in the existing information gap about the peer-reviewed case writing as scholarly research activity with the purpose to support the development of case writing in the management and economics subjects by faculty of smaller universities. The local peer support for case writing is limited or even non-existent at smaller schools, while at the same time the value of the case research activity may be underestimated by school deans. The paper offered a practical guidance on how to get international support while developing teaching cases, and how to educate your school administration about the value of your case writing activities.

This paper was intended as a policy analysis type of research and a guidance to school deans and accrediting bodies. Ultimately, if the case writing activities of the faculty are not adequately valued by the administration and the accreditations, then faculty will not be giving time and effort to developing cases and incorporating case method into their teaching. Consequently, the gap between theory and practice in students' learning will persist – which is a poor approach to higher education. As Albert Einstein famously said: “In theory, theory and practice are the same. In practice, they are not.”

Faculty involvement will remain limited unless the school deans and the accrediting bodies apply proper motivation to support academic case writing.

It is challenging, if not impossible, for a young faculty member to produce a high-quality teaching case without peer support and appropriate training. Deans at smaller schools with no experienced case writers among local faculty should motivate instructors attend international case conferences and case writing workshops – choosing appropriate training from the various formats and by the various academic associations presented in this paper (see Table 2).

Deans at smaller schools with limited budgets may encourage faculty and PhD students apply for international scholarships available to new case writers via The Case Centre and the NACRA's Case Research Foundation. These scholarships typically cover the expenses of attending case training/conference as well as some expenses which case authors may encounter in the process of preparing the case.

School deans and accrediting bodies should develop a systematic approach how to assess the case writing activities by the faculty – rating the various formats of case publications. One such recommended assessment scale has been created by the author and was presented in Table 2. In particular, the deans should incentivize faculty submit their cases for publication in peer-reviewed case journals, of which the leading journals would be “Case Research Journal” by NACRA, “The CASE Journal” and “Emerging Markets Case Studies” by Emerald Publishing (both listed in SCOPUS), “Case Focus Journal” by The Case Centre, “Business Case Journal”, “Journal of Case Studies” and “Journal of Critical Incidents” by Society for Case Research. The process of going through a blind peer review is an essential academic training and greatly contributes to the professional development of faculty. The peer review process at case journals is no less stringent than at ‘regular’ academic journals. This process allows faculty to produce high-quality cases – thus generating value to the students, the school, and society at large.

Deans could encourage faculty participate in the international case writing competitions. For new case writers, a particularly good opportunity would be the Annual Competition “Outstanding New Case Writer” by The Case Centre (see the 2021 winner in this category at <https://www.thecasecentre.org/caseSpotlight/2021/RoyRene>).

Peer-reviewed case publications and competition awards are valuable additions to a school's research portfolio and strong evidence of excellence in teaching and learning as well as proof of academia-industry collaboration.

Deans of larger schools with adequate budgets may consider creating a local case research center – which will undoubtedly generate positive publicity for the school and may become a revenue generating unit after a few initial years when the case collection is made available via the school's website or sold via The Case Centre, as

per the examples provided in this paper. See the details of selected local case research centers in Appendix A.

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**Appendix A. Sample list of local case centers at universities and business schools outside the U.S. and Europe (listed in alphabetical order by name)**

1. AAPBS Case Center (by 6 business schools from Hong Kong, South Korea, Philippines, China, Thailand and Japan),  
[http://www.aapbs.org/images/e\\_Case\\_Center\\_Brochure\\_2015.pdf](http://www.aapbs.org/images/e_Case_Center_Brochure_2015.pdf)
2. Asia Case Research Center, <https://www.acrc.hku.hk/>
3. Asia Pacific Case Center (Japan), <https://mba.nucba.ac.jp/en/case/>
4. Case Research Center at IIM Calcutta, India  
<https://www.iimcal.ac.in/faculty/centers-of-excellence/case-research-center-iimccrc>
5. Case Research Unit at LUMS, Pakistan, <https://crc.lums.edu.pk/crc-about>
6. China Business Case Center,  
[https://www.sem.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/Programs/Case\\_Center.htm](https://www.sem.tsinghua.edu.cn/en/Programs/Case_Center.htm)
7. IBS Case Research Center, India, <https://www.ibshyderabad.org/Case-Study-Focus.html>
8. India Case Research center by AIMA, <https://www.caseresearchaima.in/>
10. IPMI International Business School Case Center (Indonesia),  
<https://ipmi.ac.id/case-center>
11. IUJ Case Center (Japan), <https://www.iuj.ac.jp/icc/>
12. KCC (El-Khazindar Business Research and Case Center by the American University in Cairo, Egypt) <https://business.aucegypt.edu/research/centers/kcc>
13. Management Case Research Center of Peking University,  
[https://en.gsm.pku.edu.cn/Faculty\\_Research/Research/Management\\_Case\\_Research\\_Center.htm](https://en.gsm.pku.edu.cn/Faculty_Research/Research/Management_Case_Research_Center.htm)
14. Silk Road Case Center, Kazakhstan <https://en.narxoz.kz/research/institutes/srcc/>
15. Sukkur IBA Case Research Center, Pakistan, <https://www.iba-suk.edu.pk/CRC>
16. Wits Business School Case Centre (South Africa), <https://www.wbs.ac.za/centres--chairs/case-centre/>