



A small group in Science Case Net sent out a survey about case study use in “lecture” versus on exams to the wider group. Our main objective was to assess whether teachers were using case studies in both the “lecture” and exam portions of their classes and if not, why not? As this was meant to be a quick, preliminary glance at this topic, potential respondents were given five days to take the 5-10 minute long questionnaire from September 10-14, 2015. Assuming the Science Case Net and Case Study Facebook groups comprise 386 people (with some overlap), we had a small response rate of 20 people. Nonetheless, we ended up with a reasonable spread of small and large university classrooms and teachers with varying lengths of time in front of the classroom. We did have a gender bias, with only 20% of responses coming from male teachers, but this matches the bias of the groups we surveyed.

Preliminary Results: Regardless of how long respondents had been teaching (0-5, 5-10, 5-15, 20+ years), everyone has used case studies in the “lecture” portion of their courses, with similar distributions among teachers of varying experience and levels of case study use. What may be surprising, however, is that 60% of respondents have not used this same pedagogical tool on exams although 50% are interested in doing so (Fig. 1).

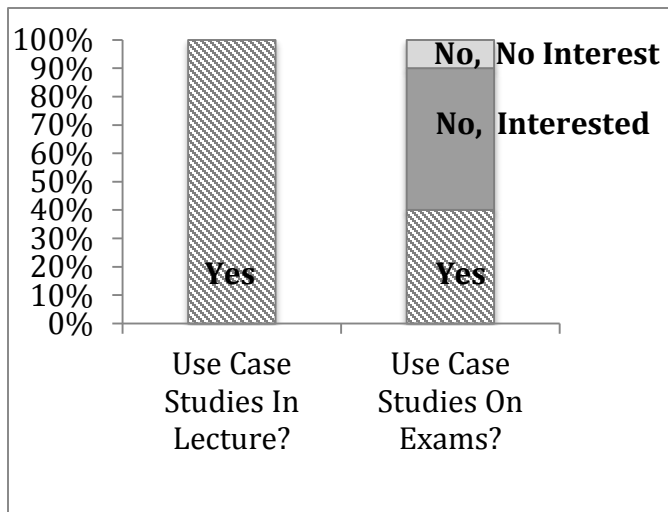


Fig. 1. Use of case studies in courses (N=20).

For respondents using case studies for exam assessment, 75% assessed individuals and 25% assessed groups, although one respondent said they are considering group assessment. Additionally, 75% used 1-2 paragraphs of context that might be an extension of an already seen case or might be a new case, 100% used multiple questions per case, and 50% used short answer questions as their format with one respondent having used multiple choice questions.

90% of respondents, regardless of which category they fell in (Fig. 1) shared potential barriers to using case studies for exam assessment. For 40% of respondents, time for grading played a large role as a barrier. Other important considerations

included larger classes (which ties in with time for grading we suspect), finding appropriate material to align with course goals, the balance between a focused case and covering material in the unit, expectations by colleagues who are open-minded toward case studies in “lecture” but still want traditional exams, and whether case studies for exam assessment are more challenging for English-as-second language students than for native speakers.

Considering the finding here, with two groups assessed, who are encouraged to use cases, we suggest additional tools and resources are needed to help facilitate case study use on exams. 50% of respondents agreed and suggested it would be helpful if some sample questions and grading rubrics were available for some common STEM topics that might be used for exam assessment. When we asked whether encouraging National Center for Case Study Teaching in Science (NCCSTS) case writers to include exam assessment questions might be helpful in overcoming time barriers on exams, 70% of respondents gave a resounding yes! One caveat that came from three respondents, however, urged keeping it optional for case writers to add exam assessment questions in submittals because it is already time consuming to write cases and they wouldn’t want people to be discouraged by that from submitting.