

Case study discussions

Giving students a case study to discuss can help them to engage with a study issue without making it too personal. Below is a case study I've used successfully in the past. The idea is that the students fill in the questions individually first, then discuss them in small groups, then there is a whole group discussion.

Case Study 3 – Dave

Dave has been at university for a few weeks studying Biological Sciences. He's got a couple of school friends on the same course so they've decided to rent a flat together instead of staying in halls of residence. None of them have lived away from home before so they're enjoying the freedom to have parties and to go out whenever they feel like it. Dave plays guitar in a band with some friends and meets up with them to practice a couple of times a week, he also has a part-time job for 10 hours per week working in a music shop.

At school Dave worked pretty hard in his classes but he was not always that good at getting his homework done. He left his revision for his exams a bit late but managed to get enough done to get the grades he wanted. Since he's been at university Dave has turned up for most of his classes, although he's missed a few early morning lectures. So far the only assessments he's had to do have been a couple of lab reports, so it feels like he's got a lot of free time. It's 8 weeks till the Christmas holidays and the assessments Dave will have to complete before then are show below, along with his weekly timetable.

- A 1500 word essay due in 3 weeks time, which counts for 25% of the mark for one course
- 2 practical write-ups due in 3 and 4 weeks time, which each count for 5% of the mark for one course
- 1 practical write-up due in 6 weeks time, which counts for 10% of the mark for one course
- 1 multiple choice exam in eight weeks time, which counts for 15% of the mark for one course

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
9am – 10am	Lecture				
10am – 11am		Lecture	Lecture	Lecture	Practical
11am – 12pm	Lecture		Tutorial	Lecture	Practical
12pm – 1pm					Practical
1pm – 2pm	Practical	Tutorial			
2pm – 3pm	Practical	Lecture			Lecture
3pm – 4pm	Practical			Tutorial	

Please answer the following questions –

1) How many hours per week do you think it would be reasonable for Dave to spend on his studies in addition to attending his classes? *(You can then multiply this figure by eight to work out how much time he's got for his studies until the Christmas break).*

2) What strengths do you think Dave brings to his studies?

3) What sorts of difficulties do you think Dave might run into with his studies?

4) What advice would you give Dave about managing his studies up until Christmas?