

Teaching Management Cases in the Generative AI Era: Practical Challenges and Pedagogical Responses in Graduate Management Education

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Abstract: Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) can now perform many activities traditionally associated with management case analysis, including summarizing cases, identifying problems, applying analytical frameworks, generating alternatives, and drafting recommendations. This creates a practical challenge for case teaching because plausible outputs do not necessarily reflect students' engagement in the reasoning and managerial judgment that case-based learning is intended to develop. This paper examines the implications of GenAI for graduate management case teaching and proposes practical adjustments across three stages of the teaching process. Before class, students are encouraged to develop an initial problem formulation before consulting GenAI. During class, AI-generated outputs can be used as material for evaluating evidence, questioning assumptions, comparing alternatives, and defending decisions. After class, written assessment can be supplemented with information about students' reasoning and use of GenAI. The paper argues that the objective should not be to exclude GenAI from case teaching, but to design learning activities that keep students actively engaged in problem formulation, critical evaluation, and managerial judgment.

Keywords: Generative Artificial Intelligence, Management Education, Case Method, Case Teaching, Critical Thinking, Managerial Judgment, Assessment.

1. INTRODUCTION

Generative artificial intelligence (GenAI) has rapidly become part of the learning environment in business and management education. Tools such as ChatGPT can assist students with information retrieval, idea generation, writing, analysis, and feedback, creating new learning opportunities while also raising concerns about over-reliance, academic integrity, and critical thinking. Recent research has therefore increasingly considered how GenAI can be incorporated into teaching and assessment in ways that support meaningful learning (Ratten & Jones, 2023; Fischer *et al.*, 2024; Kaul *et al.*, 2026).

These developments are particularly relevant to case-based management education. The case method places students in situations in which they must interpret information, identify managerial problems, consider alternative courses of action, and make decisions under conditions that often involve ambiguity and incomplete information. Rather than simply recalling management concepts, students are expected to apply knowledge to specific contexts, discuss alternative interpretations, and exercise judgment. Recent research highlights the role of the case method in tertiary business and management education and its emphasis on active learning, higher-order thinking, analytical skills, decision making, and real-world application (Mu & Hatch, 2024; Puri, 2026).

GenAI complicates this learning process because it can perform many activities that have traditionally formed part of case preparation and case assignments. Given a case or sufficient contextual information, students can ask GenAI to summarize the situation, apply common analytical frameworks, identify possible problems, generate strategic alternatives, and draft recommendations. If students routinely delegate these activities to GenAI, they may bypass parts of

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the reasoning process that case analysis is intended to develop. This is particularly important at the stage of problem formulation. Recent business education research warns that outsourcing the initial framing of a problem to GenAI may allow students to avoid a cognitively demanding stage in which problems and constraints must first be identified (Kaul *et al.*, 2026).

This paper therefore examines how GenAI can be incorporated into graduate management case teaching while maintaining students' engagement in reasoning and managerial judgment. The discussion is organized around three stages of case teaching: pre-class case preparation, in-class case discussion, and post-class assessment. For each stage, practical adjustments are proposed to encourage students to engage in initial problem formulation, critically evaluate AI-generated analysis, and make their reasoning more visible. The aim is to provide management educators with concise and practical guidance for integrating GenAI into case teaching while preserving the core learning processes of case analysis.

2. Challenges to Management Case Teaching in the GenAI Era

2.1 Outsourcing Problem Formulation

An important part of case analysis is determining what problem requires managerial attention. Cases often contain multiple issues, incomplete information, and competing interpretations, requiring students to distinguish symptoms from underlying problems and decide which issues deserve priority. This process is particularly important because the way a problem is framed influences the subsequent analysis and the range of solutions considered.

GenAI can substantially reduce the effort required at this stage. Students can provide a case to a GenAI tool and ask it to identify the central problem, relevant constraints, or key decision facing the manager. Such assistance may offer useful alternative perspectives, but using it before forming an initial view may reduce students' direct engagement with the problem-formulation process. Kaul *et al.*, (2026) identify this as an important issue for critical thinking in business education, noting that defining a problem and specifying its constraints are cognitively demanding parts of reasoning. The teaching challenge is therefore how case preparation can encourage students to engage with the case and develop an initial interpretation before considering AI-generated perspectives.

2.2 Accepting Plausible but Insufficiently Evaluated Analysis

Once a problem has been identified, GenAI can also produce many of the analytical outputs commonly required in management case assignments. It can apply familiar frameworks such as SWOT analysis or Porter's Five Forces, organize arguments, suggest strategic alternatives, and generate recommendations. These outputs are often well structured and plausible, making them useful as a starting point for further analysis.

However, a plausible response does not necessarily demonstrate that the student has evaluated the evidence, assumptions, and contextual conditions underlying the analysis. Research on GenAI in management education has raised concerns that reliance on AI-generated responses may reduce students' engagement with higher-order thinking and critical evaluation when such outputs are accepted without sufficient scrutiny (Valcea *et al.*, 2024; Kaul *et al.*, 2026). This issue is particularly relevant to case teaching because managerial cases rarely have a single correct answer. Much of their educational value lies in deciding which evidence matters, assessing competing interpretations, and defending a recommendation under uncertainty. The teaching challenge is therefore to encourage students to treat AI-generated analysis as material to be examined, compared, and revised rather than as a ready-made answer.

2.3 Losing Visibility into Student Reasoning

GenAI also creates a challenge for assessing case analysis. Traditional case assignments often require students to submit a written report containing their analysis and recommendations. When GenAI can assist with problem identification, analytical frameworks, argument development, and writing, the quality of the final report alone provides less information about how the student reached the conclusions presented.

This does not mean that written case reports have lost their value. Rather, relying only on the final product makes it more difficult for instructors to observe the reasoning process behind it. Existing research has therefore called for reconsideration of assessment practices in management and business education, including greater attention to authentic and process-oriented forms of assessment (Ratten & Jones, 2023; Kaul *et al.*, 2026). Evidence from postgraduate management education also suggests that students may use GenAI predominantly for writing and rephrasing rather than for more advanced sense-making and critical thinking (Fischer *et al.*, 2024). This finding further raises the question of how assessment can capture students' analytical engagement rather than only the quality of their final written output. For case teaching, the practical challenge is to retain the benefits of written analysis while making important elements of students' reasoning more visible, including how they initially framed the problem, how they used GenAI, how they evaluated its output, and why they accepted or revised particular conclusions.

3. Practical Redesign of Management Case Teaching

3.1 Before Class: Supporting Initial Problem Formulation

Pre-class preparation is an important stage of case teaching because it gives students an opportunity to develop an initial understanding of the managerial situation before classroom discussion. With routine access to GenAI, students may begin their preparation by asking an AI tool to summarize the case, identify the central problem, or recommend a course of action. Such assistance can make preparation more efficient, but it can also influence students' interpretation before they have developed an initial view of the case themselves.

A practical approach is to sequence the use of GenAI. Students can first be asked to record a brief initial interpretation of the case before consulting an AI tool. For example, they may identify the central managerial problem, select two or three pieces of evidence supporting this interpretation, and briefly indicate what additional information they would want before making a decision. This initial response does not need to be lengthy or formally graded. Its purpose is to encourage students to engage directly with the case and develop an initial position before considering AI-generated perspectives.

GenAI can then be introduced as a source of alternative interpretations. Students may ask the tool to identify the main problem or analyze the same case and then compare its response with their initial view. Instead of asking whether the AI answer is simply correct or incorrect, students can consider questions such as: *What did GenAI identify that I did not? Which interpretation is better supported by the case? What assumptions underlie the AI's problem definition? Would I revise my initial interpretation, and why?* In this way, GenAI can broaden and test students' thinking while keeping them actively involved in problem formulation.

3.2 In Class: Moving from Answers to Evaluation and Judgment

When students can use GenAI to generate plausible case analyses before class, discussion questions that mainly ask them to reproduce standard analytical outputs may provide limited opportunities for demonstrating higher-order reasoning. Questions such as *what are the company's strengths and weaknesses?* or *What are the five competitive forces in this industry?* may still help organize discussion, but they need not constitute the main intellectual task of the class. This direction is consistent with case-method research emphasizing critical thinking, analytical skills, decision making, dialogue, and the application of management knowledge to real-world situations (Mu & Hatch, 2024; Puri, 2026).

Classroom discussion can instead place greater emphasis on evaluating evidence, challenging assumptions, comparing alternatives, and defending decisions. For example, rather than asking students to conduct a SWOT analysis, an instructor might present an AI-generated SWOT analysis and ask: *Which two claims are least supported by the case evidence, and how would you revise them?* Similarly, instead of simply asking students to recommend a strategy, the instructor might ask: *Which alternative would you choose, what assumption is most important to your recommendation, and what new information would cause you to change your decision?*

GenAI-generated responses can also be used directly as discussion material. An instructor can present one or more AI-generated interpretations without treating them as authoritative answers. Students can be asked to identify missing evidence, questionable assumptions, overlooked stakeholders, or alternative explanations. Different student groups may defend or challenge competing recommendations and then reconsider their positions after hearing opposing arguments. Such activities retain a central feature of case discussion: students are expected not only to reach a conclusion but also to explain and defend how they reached it. The emphasis therefore shifts from generating standard analytical outputs toward exercising managerial judgment about evidence, assumptions, trade-offs, and uncertainty.

3.3 After Class: Making Student Reasoning Visible

The availability of GenAI does not require abandoning written case reports. Written analysis remains useful for assessing students' ability to organize evidence, develop arguments, and communicate recommendations clearly. However, the final report can be supplemented with a limited amount of process information so that instructors can better understand how students' reasoning developed.

One practical option is to require a short reflection alongside the final case report. Students might briefly state their initial problem definition, explain how they used GenAI, identify one AI-generated idea that they accepted or rejected, and describe one conclusion they revised after further analysis. The reflection need not reproduce complete AI conversations. Its purpose is to provide a concise account of how the student's analysis developed and what role GenAI played in that process. Where appropriate, a short oral follow-up can also be used to ask students to explain or defend a key recommendation.

Assessment can then place some weight on the quality of reasoning as well as on the quality of the final product. Relevant criteria may include the use of case evidence, identification of assumptions, evaluation of alternative

interpretations, justification of decisions, and critical use of GenAI. The objective is to provide sufficient visibility into the analytical process to evaluate how students formulate problems, assess alternatives, and justify managerial decisions.

Table 1: Examples of Redesigning Management Case Activities in the GenAI Era

Teaching stage	Conventional task	GenAI-era adjustment	Primary learning focus
Before class	Summarize the case	Identify the facts most relevant to the managerial decision and explain why they matter.	Relevance judgment
Before class	Identify the main problem	Develop an initial problem definition and supporting evidence before consulting GenAI, then compare it with alternative AI-generated interpretations.	Problem formulation
In class	Apply an analytical framework	Evaluate an AI-generated analysis and revise claims that are not adequately supported by case evidence.	Evidence evaluation
In class	Interpret the case using relevant concepts or theories	Identify a debatable element of an AI-generated interpretation and defend an alternative interpretation using case evidence.	Critical evaluation
In class	Recommend a course of action	Defend a preferred option by identifying key assumptions, trade-offs, risks, and information that could change the decision.	Managerial judgment
After class	Submit a final case report	Briefly explain how the analysis changed after discussion and/or GenAI use and why important conclusions were retained or revised.	Visible reasoning

4. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

GenAI does not remove the value of case teaching, but it changes the conditions under which case analysis takes place. When students can readily use GenAI to summarize cases, identify problems, apply analytical frameworks, and generate recommendations, completing these tasks provides less direct evidence of students' analytical engagement. The practical issue is therefore not simply whether GenAI should be used, but how case teaching can be designed so that students remain actively involved in the reasoning and judgment that case analysis is intended to develop.

The suggestions in this paper emphasize three related principles. First, students should have opportunities to develop an initial interpretation of a case before considering AI-generated perspectives. Second, GenAI outputs can be treated as objects of analysis rather than ready-made answers. Asking students to examine evidence, question assumptions, compare alternatives, and revise AI-generated analysis can shift attention from producing standard analytical outputs toward exercising managerial judgment. Third, assessment can place greater emphasis on making reasoning visible by supplementing final written products with information about students' initial judgments, use of GenAI, evaluation of its outputs, and subsequent revisions.

This approach does not require instructors to exclude GenAI from management case teaching or to engage in extensive monitoring of students' AI use. Instead, GenAI can be incorporated purposefully at points where it provides alternative perspectives or material for critical evaluation, while students remain actively engaged in problem formulation, evidence evaluation, and managerial judgment. Such an approach may be particularly appropriate in graduate management education, where students are expected to move beyond the mechanical application of analytical frameworks and develop the ability to make and defend decisions under uncertainty.

Future research could examine how different forms of GenAI-supported case teaching affect student engagement, critical evaluation, and managerial judgment. As GenAI becomes increasingly embedded in academic and professional work, the continuing value of case teaching will depend in part on designing learning activities that encourage students to critically evaluate AI-generated analysis and take responsibility for the managerial judgments they make.

Declaration of Generative AI in Scientific Writing

During the preparation of this work, the author used ChatGPT to improve the readability and language of the manuscript. After using this tool, the author reviewed and edited the content as needed and takes full responsibility for the content of the publication.

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