

Business Ethics

BUS 300

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Outline Guide for Writing Case Analyses

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Each case analysis we do will be graded on a 30-point scale. A maximum of 3 points will concern the punctuation, spelling, grammar, style and general appearance of the paper. You should write a paper discussing the case (2-3 pages, double-spaced), which means that you should write in complete sentences and paragraphs, not in outline, memo, or bullet-point form. Sub-titles corresponding to the seven questions below are highly recommended. I expect you to spend some time reworking a rough draft before turning in your assignment and to proofread the final version of your paper.

The remaining 27 points will be distributed over the following seven questions, which I expect you to address for each case. *Be careful to devote most of your attention to the questions that count most.* Do not narrate the facts of the case beyond what is minimally necessary—the first two questions can be dealt with in a sentence or two, and the first four questions can probably be addressed on the first page.

1. **Who is the decision maker in the case?** (1 point)

Before you can effectively recognize the issue you need to identify the decision maker (DM). Cases may sometimes be considered from the perspective of several different participants, but you must choose one person or group from whose position you will analyze the case. *Remember that the DM cannot also be a relevant stakeholder*, that is, the DM cannot hold rights against himself or herself. The person you want to identify is the one who must make a decision in the context of the case as it is written.

2. **What is the problem or issue the DM faces?** (2 points)

There may be more than one problem or issue that can be reasonably identified in a case, but you should choose the ONE that seems most important. This issue should be one that the DM confronts, and it can concern either the means to a goal or the choice of the goal itself. Be concrete and avoid saying that the issue is, say, “a question of fairness,” or something similarly vague. Always try to put the issue in the form of a question: Should the DM do . . . ? This compels you to articulate more precisely what the problem is and enables you to define more easily what courses of action might be available.

7. **Propose and defend a course of action.** (5 points; 7 points w/moral principle/theme)

This is the most important part of the analysis. Your task in this part of the paper is to explain which option should be chosen. If you have done your work well up to now, you should be able to identify one option that best respects to the rights of the stakeholders. This will mean explaining, *on the basis of an explicit moral principle*, why some rights (and consequently some stakeholders) are more important here than others. A relevant moral principle is a decision rule, applicable in this case (and similar cases), that would support and explain why your proposed course of action is a morally sound one. (For example, the law requires manufacturers of some products to include a warning label, on the grounds that *Manufacturers must insure that customers are aware of dangers associated with the products they buy.*) In order to be perfectly clear about what moral principle is involved in your analysis, you must underline it.

Be careful not to prefer a certain resolution because you *imagine* that other people will react in such a way as to make things turn out right (they may not react as you imagine). You might also consider how decisions will affect the DM, but not as though he or she were a relevant stakeholder.

The following questions might be helpful to you:

- Is this course of action something the DM can really do?
- Does the resolution violate common moral norms?
- Will this resolution support the integrity and character of the DM, or will it be a compromise that will corrode this integrity?
- What would a truly virtuous person do in this situation? Why?

Relevant Moral Principle: _____

Sample Sub-titles:

- 1-2. The Decision Maker and the Issue
3. Possible Courses of Action
4. Potential Stakeholders
5. Duties Owed to the Relevant Stakeholders
6. Relevant Themes and Concepts
7. Proposed Course of Action