

# Case Studies in the Study and Practice of Architecture

## Development Checklist and Submission Guidelines

prepared by

The American Institute of Architects  
Case Study Work Group

a subcommittee of

The Large Firm Roundtable  
The Educator/Practitioner Net



THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

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### Development Checklist and Submission Guidelines

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# Contents

- 4 Preface**
- 5 Introduction**
- 8 Project Abstract**
- 9 Project Perspectives**
  - Protocols: The Web of Decision-Making**
  - Constituencies: The Client Voice in Projects**
  - Stories: The Episodes of Practice**
  - Ideas: Innovation in Architecture Practice**
  - Measures: Individual, Practice, and Client Measures of Success**
  - Illustrations: The Graphic Overview**
- 14 Project Analysis**
  - The Client**
  - Business**
  - Design**
  - Delivery**
  - Services**
  - Resources**
- 20 Case Study Learning Plan**
- 21 Submission of Case Studies**
  - Submitting a Comprehensive Case Study**
  - Submitting an Abridged Case Study**
- 25 Faculty Instruction Guide**
- 27 Firm Participation Guide**
- 29 Bibliography**

# Preface

The idea of developing *Case Studies in the Study and Practice of Architecture* was proposed initially in October 1998 in Dallas, Texas, at a meeting attended by eleven representatives of the AIA Large Firm Roundtable (LFRT) and thirteen deans of schools of architecture. The intent of the meeting was to find ways to bridge the gap between the academy and the profession. The case study initiative has been endorsed at subsequent meetings of the LFRT as well as by the AIA Board of Directors, the AIA Educator/Practitioner Net, and at gatherings of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture.

As the idea gathered momentum, the Case Study Work Group was formulated as a collaborative subcommittee of the LFRT and the Educator/Practitioner Net. Participation in the work group by practitioners from large, mid-size, and small firms as well as by representatives from schools of architecture has been critical. The Case Study Work Group met three times to develop and refine the *Development Checklist and Submission Guidelines*.

The intent of this collaborative effort is to develop a new body of knowledge regarding the practice of architecture through rigorous preparation of architectural case studies, for both traditional and nontraditional projects. The information developed will be available to students, faculty, interns, practicing architects, and the public, in an attempt to better inform all of these constituencies. The goal is to provide a context, based in the reality of individual projects, for continuing education of practitioners and, for students, a method of learning how to learn.

The deadline for submission of case studies is July 1. Following submission and review by the Case Study Work Group, 25 case studies will be selected for publication on the AIA's Web site.

This document is the starting point of an iterative process of continuous review and monitoring to ensure the effort will result in the development of an excellent body of new knowledge. On behalf of all of the stakeholders, we believe that if the case study process is embraced and enthusiastically implemented, all facets of the profession will be enriched.

On behalf of the Case Study Work Group

Richard Green, FAIA, cochair

Marvin J. Malecha, FAIA, cochair and editor

# Introduction

The case study method addresses the importance of learning how to learn as an essential element of continuous professional growth.

Education and practice are bound by a complex body of knowledge. When the processes of architecture are studied closely they reveal continuous and astute decision-making and provide students and professionals the opportunity to learn from each other. Each story will weave a different lesson: one scenario will emphasize firm management, another client interaction, and another contract negotiation. Case studies provide orientation to the complexity of practice for the novice and perspective for the seasoned professional. The case study

- Connects the project to prior experience.
- Explores new knowledge that has influenced the project.
- Records the interrelationships of people, ideas, contracts, and goods.
- Recognizes the configuration and reconfiguration of design teams.
- Celebrates the talents, expertise, roles, and boundaries of each team member.

Case studies create materials that are valuable to a wide range of constituencies:

- Students who develop the discipline of investigation.
- Interns who nurture an understanding of the culture of practice.
- Educators who gain a heightened awareness of the conduct of practice.
- Practitioners who pursue continuing education.
- Allied disciplines and related professionals who seek to make connections to architecture as consultants.
- Generalists who seek a greater perspective of practice.
- The public, including clients, who seek an accessible means of understanding architecture.

The case study format is intended to structure a body of knowledge that is easily accessible. The format therefore consists of the following four elements: (1) a concise *abstract* and assessment of the relevance of the project and the team required to accomplish it; (2) *perspectives* related to the case that broaden the understanding of decision-making, the complexity of project constituencies, the stories of practice, the value placed on innovation, and the measures of success; (3) *analysis* of the specific relevant details of the case, including exploration of issues as diverse as obtaining work and the

nature of services provided; and (4) a *learning plan* that articulates topics to be studied and identifies those who will be using the material.

The role of the AIA is vital to the development of case studies. Providing information to a broad professional base and the resources to build and maintain a body of practice knowledge depends on the AIA to sustain a long-term effort. This effort includes sustaining the evolution of a new body of information, building partnerships between education and practice, and supporting the role of academic programs of architecture.

Exposure to the best examples of practice communicates excellence to the student. Learning with others is the essence of design practice. Learning to learn, learning excellence, and learning with others defines the essence of the case study process and also enhances the profession's body of knowledge. Through case studies, connections to the lessons of practice can document the successes and failures of the profession.

Integrity, attention to fact and detail, and the high academic standards of serious scholarship must characterize the case study process. The partnership of students, faculty, and practitioners defines a case study, which evolves either as the result of students under the direction of faculty, through the efforts of a firm to develop a body of practice knowledge, or as individual faculty scholarship. The case study process holds great promise as a form of scholarship in teaching, application and integration. It brings disparate practice responsibilities into focus as a form of scholarship.

## Submission of Case Studies

ACSA-member schools, members of the LFRT, and AIA members are invited to submit one comprehensive case study and one abridged case study annually. All submissions are due on July 1 and should be sent to the AIA national component for blind review. The AIA Case Study Work Group will make final selections. See page 41 for more details about submissions.

### Abridged and Comprehensive Case Studies

A case study may vary from the scale of a specific building system to the evolution of an entire community. It may include the perspective of the services that affect the realization of buildings and places. Case studies may be submitted in one of two formats: comprehensive and abridged.

The *abridged case study* is an abbreviated practice assessment. It is shorter than the comprehensive format and is intended to be used as an exploratory document, to address a specific issue, to respect the confidentiality of a project, to update an already completed case study, and to raise further questions for investigations.

The *comprehensive case study* is a detailed and concise articulation of the facts and events that have combined in the realization of projects and the evolution of related services.

The development checklist and submission guidelines follow. The checklist is prepared as a guiding menu. It is not the intention of the process to address every issue raised within these guidelines. The authors must decide which topics will best explain the details of the case in a concise fashion.

Continuing education credits may be earned by participating in the development of case study materials.

# Project Abstract

The *abstract* is a statement of the most important elements of the case study and the lessons derived from its intense observation. The case study abstract is intended to provide critical information concerning the theme, type, and issues of the project. It takes into account the nature and scale of the case study, its most appropriate applications, and its importance as a seminal example of a particular building or service type. Assumptions, implications, conceptual positions, the measures of success, and alternative roles and services are considered. The project abstract should include a list of significant team members and client/user representatives.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

## Considerations

## Remarks

What is the case?

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What is the most significant identifying feature of the case?

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Who are the significant individuals, teams, and institutions?

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What is the significant lesson derived from the case?

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What are the appropriate teaching/learning applications?

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Does this case represent alternatives or innovations in the accepted mainstream of professional practice?

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## Stories: The Episodes of Practice

Stories of practice inform the interrelated nature of events and people that cause buildings, places, and services to evolve. Each case study presents another story.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

### Considerations

### Remarks

What are the generative ideas (concepts) of the case?

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Does the case have a special identifiable personality?

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What is the oral history of the case, including practice war stories?

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What are the anecdotal lessons learned from the case?

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## Ideas: Innovation in Architecture Practice

Ideas and innovation are closely associated with design services. The underlying idea and the related ways and means of accomplishing the idea are often defined by the willingness to venture and therefore innovate.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

### Considerations

### Remarks

Are there any specific examples of innovation in the case?

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Are there any specific examples of innovation in service and technology?

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Has innovation been discouraged ("that is not the way we do it")?

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# Project Analysis

The *project analysis* section of the case study is focused on the data, observations, and experiences of the project. Conclusions to be drawn from close observation depend on the clarity, openness, and accuracy of this section. Assessment of the project includes the relationship with the client, the business strategies of the professional design firm, the means by which design services are delivered, the nature of the services, and the resources required to deliver those services.

## The Client

A description of the client, the influence of the client on the project, and the architect-client relationship.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

### Considerations

### Remarks

Why did the client decide to hire an architect? Clients and change; Client strategies; Alternate facility development approaches

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How and why did the client select the architect? Value-based selection; Competition-based selection; Relationship-based selection (referral)

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Why did the architect choose to pursue this client? Understanding markets; Client-centered markets; Profit motivation

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What was the working relationship with the client? Profiling the client; Focusing on service; Friendship

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How did the architect come to understand the client? Nature of the client; Client values; Compatibility with societal values

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## Business

A description of the professional office context for project work.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study.  
The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

### Considerations

### Remarks

What is the firm's (individual's) philosophy? Vision, Mission, Goals; Objectives, Strategies, Tactics; Logistics

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What is the nature of the firm's (individual's) business planning? Firm identity and expertise; Strategic planning; Firm legal structure; Team ownership model; Strategic alliances; Local, regional, global context; Ownership transition; Merger and acquisition plans; Stock option plans, ESOP; Private holding and public offering

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What are the marketing and community outreach strategies? Market planning; Identity; Strategies related to the project search; Project interview; Presentation; Public relations; Political involvement

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What are the relevant financial implications of this case to the firm? Financial and accounting systems; Office and project management; Capital planning and the progress of the project

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What are the human resource strategies related to this case? Team management issues and assignments; Performance assessment; Staff development; Team collaboration and composition

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What were the firm's (individual's) profit projections? Other financial considerations

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## Design

A description of the building, system, or community design under consideration with all appropriate illustrations and photographs.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

### Considerations

### Remarks

What are the appropriate graphic analysis diagrams for the case?

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What drawings or photographs connect aspirations to outcomes?

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What drawings and photographs describe the project? Why?

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Are there any important design references requiring citation?

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## Delivery

The management organization necessary for the realization of work defined as mainstream or as alternative practices.

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

### Considerations

### Remarks

What are the specific project delivery methods in this case?

Project delivery options; Services and compensation

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What are the specific contracts and agreements?

Agreements with clients; Project team agreements; Construction agreements; Intellectual property agreements

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# Case Study Learning Plan

A *learning plan* is an essential component of the case study. This plan identifies the audience, the models selected for study, the learning experience of students, and the rigor of investigation. Critical thinking is necessary to examine the purpose of the study, the questions at issue, the relevant available information, the inferences drawn from the available data, the concepts and theories at play in the study, the assumptions leading to the end product, the consequences of decisions, and the many points of view represented in the architectural process. The learning plan articulates the importance of the case and the manner by which it may be used as an instructional tool.

## Developing a Learning Plan

*Not every question or topic from the following menu may apply to each case study. The preparation team must make choices to provide a detailed and concise analysis.*

Considerations	Remarks
How was this case selected as a learning/teaching tool? Professional office exercise for interns and professionals; Student exercises for class reading and presentation	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
How will this case be taught? As an in-office/in-school teaching guide; As a continuing education instrument	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
What are the desired learning outcomes? Observation, Research, Practice, Collaboration skills	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Who is the anticipated audience of this case? Students; Interns; Educators; Architects; Allied disciplines; Related professions; Generalists; Public	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# Submission of Case Studies

Two types of case studies may be submitted: abridged and comprehensive. Academic programs and architecture firms may submit one *comprehensive* case study and one *abridged* case study to the AIA for review by the Case Study Work Group annually. Preference will be given to submissions jointly prepared by academic programs and firms. Selected comprehensive case studies and abridged case studies will be posted on the AIA Web site. The format for the submission of each case study type follows.

## ***Submission Deadline***

Submissions are due at the AIA national component by July 1 of each year. Send submissions to:

Director of Education/Stakeholder Relations  
The American Institute of Architects  
1735 New York Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20006-5292

## ***Submission Requirements***

Entries should consist of high-quality graphic material and text in an 8½" x 11" format. Submissions must be prepared for “blind” jury review; no indication of author should appear on or within the case study. A separate cover sheet must include the case study title, as well as the name(s), affiliation, email, fax and phone numbers, postal address, and signature of the author(s). The cover sheet serves as an agreement to submit the case study as a PDF file no larger than 2 MB if it is chosen for publication on the AIA Web site.

If material is to be returned after the jury process, please provide return packaging with sufficient postage with your submission. The AIA cannot accept liability for original material.

## ***Submission Review Process***

Submissions will be peer reviewed in a “blind” process requiring no fewer than three readings. These will result in a recommendation to the Case Study Work Group, comprised of three distinguished practitioners, three distinguished educators, and one representative-at-large from the AIA Board of Directors. The work group hopes to publish 25 studies annually on *aia.org*.

## Submitting a Comprehensive Case Study

### ***Abstract***

The abstract defines the extent of the case study. It may comprise a series of options available to the design professional and be particularly relevant to the architectural profession. This section should not be more than two pages (approximately 500 words).

- Project type
- Services type
- Project and client team
- Key study factors
- Unique characteristics

### ***Perspectives***

The perspectives section of the case study should provide an understanding of the project beyond the architect's realm and an awareness of the essence of the project. Each perspective should be less than two pages (approximately 500 words), and the entire case study perspectives section should not be more than ten pages (approximately 2500 words). Appropriate illustrations should be incorporated throughout the text.

- Protocols
- Constituencies
- Stories
- Ideas
- Measures

### ***Analysis***

This section is most concerned with the specific details of the case study. Its format corresponds directly to that of the *Architect's Handbook of Professional Practice*. There is no limit on the length of this section, as each case study will require different levels of specificity.

- Client
- Business
- Design
- Delivery
- Services
- Resources

### ***Learning Plan***

Each case study presents an opportunity to provide an overview of how the material may be taught, a teaching approach or related discipline that may best serve the profession, and material that is best communicated to the various constituencies. This section may vary in length in accordance with the complexity of the case study. However, it should be no longer than two pages (approximately 500 words).

### ***Verification***

The case study is based on actual events. Each comprehensive case study must be accompanied by a signature page identifying the preparer(s) of the study, the responsible parties of the professional firm, and the signatures of the responsible academic officials. This page affirms the accuracy of the document. If actual names are used, then concurrence statements must accompany the document, indicating the permission of each named individual to be mentioned by name in the text.

*Statement of Veracity:*

A signed statement by the preparers of the study attesting to the truth of the case study.

*Concurrence Statements:*

A signed permission statement by the firm and the client regarding the use of the material and the right to cite specific individuals within the text.

*Objectivity Statement:*

A statement signed by the preparers of the case study indicating that the document was prepared without specific bias regarding its outcome.

## Submitting an Abridged Case Study

### ***Abstract***

This section defines the extent of the case study. It may comprise a series of options available to the design professional that are particularly relevant to the architecture profession. This section should not be more than two pages (approximately 500 words). It should include the following:

- Project type
- Services type
- Project and client team
- Key study factors

### ***Perspectives***

Perspectives should provide an understanding of the project beyond the architect's realm and an awareness of the project's essence. Each perspective should be less than one page (approximately 250 words), and the entire case study perspectives section should not be more than five pages (approximately 1000 words). Incorporate illustrations as necessary.

- Protocols
- Constituencies
- Stories
- Ideas
- Measures

### ***Verification***

Each abridged case study must be accompanied by a signature page signed by the preparer(s) of the document. This page indicates the accuracy of the document. The use of actual names in an abridged case study is discouraged.

#### *Statement of Veracity:*

A signed statement by the preparers of the study attesting to the truth of the case study.

#### *Objectivity Statement:*

A statement signed by the preparers of the case study indicating that the document was prepared without specific bias regarding its outcome.

# Faculty Instruction Guide

The case study method requires attention to teaching strategies that ensure intense observation, clarity, and competence in crafting a complex chronicle. The instruction guide is intended to provide insight and suggestions to the instructor who will lead students in the preparation of the case study.

Provide introductory instruction on the nature, complexity, and conduct of professional practice before starting the case study work.

The instructor should test students before and after the case study work in order to assess their learning progress.

Develop a close relationship and understanding with an architecture firm, especially with a senior partner, before beginning the case study work. A strong relationship of trust is necessary.

Identify the firm and academic contacts for the case study. The in-office coordination team should be comprised of individuals with complementary skills, responsibilities, and roles.

The instructor must direct the formation of a student team with complementary skills. These include:

- Team editor
- Team graphic designer/photographer
- Primary team contact with the participating firm
- Team researchers (preferably those with some experience in an architecture firm, if possible)

The instructor and the student team should develop a case study work plan and timeline.

Make a conscious effort to reduce the inevitable conflict between coursework and studio work.

Use Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* as the guide for writing and editing.

Use ample illustrations to complement the writing.

Identify case study readers to provide senior peer review as the work progresses. Readers may be faculty colleagues or professionals who have agreed to act as mentors. This should be considered part of an effort to make the case study process visible to an external constituency.

- Student peer reviewers
- Faculty reviewers
- Professional mentors

Establish 25, 50, and 75 percent submittal deadlines to assess progress of the team as well as to schedule reading sessions. This should include periodic conference calls and meetings.

Contact the participating firm at each submittal stage to ensure its concurrence with the work underway and to identify any problems that may have arisen.

Clearly identify the requirements of all involved parties for final sign-off on the distribution of the case study document.

The instructor should guide the process to provide the insight for how the material may be taught, what teaching approach may best serve the students, and how the material of the case study is best communicated to the various constituencies. The learning plan should address the following questions:

- Analytical—how
- Challenge—why
- Action—what
- Hypothetical—what if
- Predictive—what will
- Lessons—so what

# Firm Participation Guide

The case study method is a commitment of time and energy. It requires strategies in the professional office that will ensure intense observation and competence in the crafting of a complex chronicle. The firm participation guide provides suggestions to the practitioner who will assist students or in-office staff members in the preparation of the case study. The case study requires openness regarding business and client development issues.

Identify a firm contact/coordinator for the case study. This individual must have the authority to release information and documents relating to the project in a timely manner.

The firm should consider the case study process an opportunity for professional development for interns and junior staff.

The firm should consider the case study format as an organizational outline for all project archiving.

The primary/responsible firm contact should have been thoroughly involved in all aspects of the case as it evolved to a finished project.

If a firm is developing a case study without any academic collaboration, a case study team should be identified with complementary skills. These include:

- Team editor
- Team graphic designer/photographer
- Team researchers

Coordinate contact on behalf of the case study team with all relevant project team members and knowledgeable client/user representatives.

Assemble all relevant documents and information relating to the case from the earliest awareness of the project to the final document.

Use Strunk and White's *The Elements of Style* as a guide for writing and editing.

Use ample illustrations to complement the writing.

Be open in responding to brutally honest questions and queries.

Schedule time for case study team office visits, question and answer sessions, and the reading of 25, 50, and 75 percent submittals.

The firm contact should be in a regular information loop with those undertaking the case study to ensure the proper approvals at the 25, 50, and 75 percent submittal stages.

Make clear the firm requirements (i.e., timing, wording, review requirements, completeness) for a 100 percent sign-off.

Enlist other members of the firm in the effort to proofread the case study as it evolves.

Remember and understand that a case study is not prepared as a marketing document. It is an intense reflection and sometimes uncomfortably honest observation of professional practice.

Clearly identify the requirements of all involved parties for final sign-off on the distribution of the case study document.

The firm contact should guide the process to provide the insight for how the material may be taught, what teaching approach may best serve the profession, and how the material of the case study is best communicated to the various constituencies. The learning plan should address the following questions:

- Analytical—how
- Challenge—why
- Action—what
- Hypothetical—what if
- Predictive—what will
- Lessons—so what

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