



# How to use case studies and tasks for public relations students

## Purpose

The case studies are designed to give students some practice in considering issues associated with reporting or communicating about mental illness, suicide and alcohol and other drug use so they will be better prepared to deal with such a situation, should it arise, when they are working in the public relations sector.



## Before you start

The case studies focus on sensitive and complex issues, and it is natural that some people may feel uncomfortable talking about them. Usually, these feelings are temporary and do not cause ongoing distress.

Talking about mental illness or suicide in an educational and supportive environment provides lecturers with an opportunity to advise students about counselling and other services available either on campus or on-line, and to encourage students experiencing challenges to seek professional help by talking to a GP, health professional or calling a crisis counselling service.

Further tips for running classes on these topics are detailed in [\*Discussing sensitive issues: A guide for educators using Mindframe resources\*](#).

The Mindframe resource [\*Understanding the impact of reporting on suicide, mental health concerns and alcohol and other drug use: A guide for public relations students\*](#) should also be provided to students as pre-reading ahead of this topic being covered in class.

These PDFs should be shared or uploaded to your course's learning portal rather than sending a link (the URL is restricted to educators only).

## Using the case studies

Descriptions of three case studies are provided in a downloadable PowerPoint slide deck. These include:

1. Tragic loss of a football star
2. New data on self-harm and LGBTQA+ people
3. Opening of new supervised injecting facility.

Please note that case studies 1 and 3 are fictionalised scenarios. Case Study 2 includes a fictionalised interview based on the release of a real data analysis report.

You can choose which case studies you wish to cover by retaining or deleting the slides and content in the PowerPoint deck as appropriate.

Each case study has a suite of supporting materials such as press releases, public statements, audio interviews and transcripts, news reports and examples of social media posts. These can be downloaded from the *Mindframe* educator portal.



## Additional notes for educators

Some of the written case study materials have links to audio files; this will be clearly highlighted in the text and these files can also be downloaded from the *Mindframe* educator portal.

Case Study 1 has been designed for the scenario to be adaptable to any football code/league (AFL, NRL, rugby union or soccer); retain, edit or delete content as appropriate.

The same case study also includes news and media content that has been reproduced for educational purposes only. It is intended to be used by students as reference examples of how communications professionals have previously communicated safely about these kinds of issues. Please pay close attention to the copyright note accompanying this material.

## Class activities

There are two key tasks with associated questions that you can find in the educator resources PowerPoint slide deck. You may choose to work on one or both of these with your students.

### Task one: Group discussion activity

Task one is designed as an in-class group discussion. Students can be allocated to a particular case study, or you may wish for all of them to work on the same one.

Guiding questions have been provided to assist in working through the case study from a public relations perspective.

You may choose to have students work through each of these questions, or to focus on specific questions relevant to a particular theme or topic aligned with your course.

Guidance on facilitating an in-class discussion is provided in the resource, [\*Discussing sensitive issues: A guide for educators using Mindframe resources\*](#). This guidance includes establishing rules for the class discussion, preparing for student disclosure or problematic discussion, offering appropriate support and ending the class with a discussion on self-care.

### Task two: Individual activity

Once students have finished the class discussion, you may wish to use this as a basis for an individual activity.

The slide deck contains a number of media item activities that could be linked to the case studies. This includes:

- Case Study 1: Creating a press release from a football club.
- Case Study 2: Preparing social media or other content from the point of view of an advocacy group.
- Case Study 3: Developing briefing notes to be used by a delegated public spokesperson.

Students should be encouraged to refer to the [\*guide for public relations students\*](#) provided as part of the pre-reading, and the relevant *Mindframe* guidelines. If the activity is to be assessed, it is suggested that one of the marking criteria is adherence to [\*Mindframe guidelines\*](#).

Students should be reminded to look after their own health and wellbeing, and that of others, in the development of their individual activity.