

Authorship/ Research Misconduct

For Trainees

Why case studies?

A core function of the UK Research Integrity Office (UKRIO) is to provide independent, expert, and confidential advice on the conduct of research, from promoting good practice to addressing allegations of misconduct. We have been doing this since 2006.

Each request for assistance received by UKRIO increases our body of knowledge. These 'lessons learned' not only inform our response to subsequent enquiries but also underpin our other activities, especially UKRIO's education and training work.

We have found that illustrative case studies are an excellent way to raise awareness of research integrity and research culture and to illustrate the complexities and 'grey areas' that can occur.

Case studies are not literal accounts of any enquiry to UKRIO. Instead, they are scenarios, based on real-life situations, which illustrate recurring or notable issues and problems that have been brought to our attention. While some case studies may mention a particular discipline or setting, they contain themes that are relevant across subjects.

Please note that this case study is fictitious. Any similarity to actual persons, organisations or events is coincidental.

Case study 1

You are the *Pro-Vice-Chancellor* (Research) of a university. A formal complaint has been made to you by **Dr Y**, a *lecturer* in the School of Music.

Dr Y joined the university six years ago, just after being awarded his PhD, to carry out teaching and research duties. He has recently been informed that his recent *application for promotion has been turned down*. The decision was made by the University Promotions Committee. Dr Y claims that a member of the Committee, **Professor B**, is biased against him and that is why his application has been turned down.

Professor B and Dr Y carried out a small joint research project three years ago. The project, which was externally funded, has been completed and a paper was published in a peer-reviewed journal last year. Professor B and Dr Y are listed as the joint authors of the paper, but Dr Y tells you that he had to fight for this.

He claims that when Professor B submitted the draft paper for publication, he *removed Dr Y as an author and added a friend as the other author instead*. Dr Y says he complained to his Head of School, who looked into the matter informally. According to Dr Y, Professor B was ordered to write a letter of apology to him. In this letter, the Professor admitted to the improper changes to the paper's authorship and said that he would not act in such a manner again.

Dr Y says it is clear that he has not been promoted '*because Professor B is out to get me*' and demands that you take action. He also says that the university did not act properly when it looked into the authorship complaint; he has always felt that Professor B's actions deserved a more serious penalty than simply being told to write a letter.



Please discuss and decide:

1. How would you respond to Dr Y?
2. Could anything have been done to prevent this situation from occurring in the first place?
3. Are there any wider issues to consider?



Promoting integrity and high ethical standards in research
Providing confidential, independent, and expert support

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