

Authorship Dispute

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 5

Dr Jones and Dr Smith are *researchers* based in the same department at a UK university. They had a fruitful collaboration on a research project, having published a number of articles related to the project in peer-reviewed journals. The two researchers are now producing a book about their research. The research was conducted under the auspices of their university.

The final manuscript was submitted to the publishers a while ago and **Dr Jones** contacts the firm for an update. He is surprised and very upset when the publishers tell him that the book is to be published with **Dr Smith** as the sole author. *Dr Jones is informed that his role in both the research and the book itself will be acknowledged in the list of contributors to the project, nothing more.* The publishers' decision is based on information supplied by Dr Smith.

As far as Dr Jones is concerned, he wrote the book with Dr Smith and should also be credited as an author of the work. He is convinced that he and Dr Smith had previously agreed that the book was a joint work and that they would each receive co-authorship. He does not remember having any written record of this agreement or of any discussions regarding authorship.

Dr Jones speaks to Dr Smith in an attempt to reach some sort of agreement on the matter but the position remains unchanged. He then tries speaking to the publishers of the book. They say that they have received reassurances from Dr Smith which they accept and they have no plans to change the attribution of authorship.

Prior to this dispute, Dr Jones believed that he had a good working relationship with Dr Smith. As well as wanting to resolve the issue of authorship, he is also concerned about how his career may be affected by the dispute with Dr Smith.



Please discuss and decide:

1. What could Dr Jones do?
2. What 'evidence' or other information might shed light on the matter?
3. How might the situation be resolved?
4. Could anything have been done to prevent this situation from occurring in the first place?



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

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