

Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics (STEM)

Research Contribution

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 7

Two *research assistants* in a medical school need some advice. They have been junior members of a research team in the school for almost two years, working on open-ended contracts with grant/project end dates that expire in a few months. Their research team is led by a professor in the same school and has been working on a single project. The project has recently been written up and is about to be published.

The research assistants tell you that they have carried out a variety of duties on the project, including providing technical assistance, doing literature searches, helping gather and organise primary data, preparing data for publication, and supporting various networks and events.

Neither research assistant expected to be listed as an author in the published article but both thought that their contribution to the project would be acknowledged. However, **the professor leading the research team has recently told them that they will not be listed in the article's acknowledgments section.** The research assistants tell you that they are confused and upset by this.

According to them, they challenged the professor's decision but were told, "*research assistants are employed to work on research projects. We don't list people in acknowledgements sections for simply doing what they are employed to do.*"

The researchers ask for your views on whether the professor's decision was correct. They stress that they are not seeking to be listed as authors on the paper but would like their contribution to the research to be acknowledged.



Please discuss and decide:

1. What should be done in response to the concerns?
2. If what the research assistants say is true, do you agree with the professor's decision and the reason for it?
3. Are there any other issues to consider?



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

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