

# PhD Student: Paid Help

*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 8

You are a *PhD student* who has recently submitted your thesis, though you have yet to sit your viva.

Feeling a bit nervous about what is to come, you talk to another PhD student (**student X**) on your course who will also be sitting their viva soon.

During the conversation, student X tells you that **they did not collect all of the data for their thesis on their own**. Instead, they paid some other researchers to gather the data. Student X says that these researchers only gathered the data but did not help with the research design, data analysis, or with writing up the thesis (student X did all of those things themselves).

Student X also says that they are not very worried about what the external examiner will think of their thesis, as *the external examiner has worked with their supervisor* on a number of research projects.



**Please discuss and decide:**

1. What actions do you take?
2. Is it acceptable for a PhD student to pay others to collect data for their PhD?
3. Is it acceptable for an external examiner to assess the PhD thesis when they have previously worked with the student's supervisor?



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

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