

ANNEX 3. EXAMPLES OF CASES

The part about the examples of cases in the Code of Conduct for Research Integrity consists of five situations with value choices and possible solutions for those situations. The solutions are constructed in a way that the last (sixth) option would describe the recommended behaviour. However, it must be kept in mind that most of value dilemmas in real life depend on context and that is why it is more important to learn to recognise deliberation points and to discuss and give reasons for value choices, rather than learn the specific recommendations. For that reason, in the courses and trainings about research ethics it is appropriate to use these cases in a way that none of the solutions is ideal (look at the choices from one to five) to instigate active discussion.

I The example case about research planning

Fictitious Research

Professor Pikk happened to read the grant proposal submitted by professor Lühike. Both professors had worked in Estonia on similar topics for many years. Yet, Professor Pikk had never heard about the phenomenon that Professor Lühike's proposal promised to study. Professor Pikk talked to other colleagues who had also never heard about Professor Lühike's research topic. Accordingly, no one believed that the proposal would be selected for funding. Professor Pikk submitted a grant proposal for the same round of funding as well but that proposal focused on studying much more common phenomena and developing new practical applications. Later, it became known that Professor Lühike received funding but Professor Pikk did not. Professor Pikk began to suspect that the other research group received funding for studying a fictitious topic.

What would you do if you were in Professor Pikk's position?

1. I'd notify the grant providers about my suspicions and ask them to review the application of Professor Lühike once again.
2. I'd go directly to Professor Lühike and inquire about their research topic.
3. I'd openly criticise the division of research funds in the media and stress the unjustness of giving funds to sketchy research projects instead of applied research.
4. I'd trust the evaluation panel and do nothing.
5. I'd voice my concern in a letter to the research institution that employs Professor Lühike and ask them to reprimand the professor.

6. It's important to talk to all parties to understand the circumstances of the case. Undoubtedly the division of research funds creates tension between competing applicants, but that doesn't mean the fund managers should prefer projects that have already proven their worth or applied research of up-and-comers. That's why we should try to understand Professor Lühike's research topic and, first and foremost, talk to them about the issue. It's also important to notify the fund managers of the suspicions, especially if it's an expert in the field who's doubtful. In that case, further responsibility lies with the funding provider, who must ensure the decisions are unbiased, justified and transparent.

II The example case about conduct of research

Two PhD students

Doctoral student Tali has gathered tons of video material on their research topic. Before gathering data, PhD student Tali asked all interviewees for written consent confirming that the material would only be used in the dissertation and not shown to third parties. Its contents would remain confidential. The consent form didn't address any further research.

The PhD student gathered data for two years. After some time, doctoral student Tiugu, who is researching the same field, turns to doctoral student Tali, asking to use their video material. Tiugu finds that the material contains valuable data, and gathering this information again would be a pointless waste of resources. Tali refuses to share the material, referring to the agreement with the subjects of the research. Tali is willing to make an exception if Tiugu names them co-author in all publications that use Tali's data. Tiugu refuses that offer and goes to their supervisor, who also supervises PhD student Tali.

If you were the supervisor, how would you respond?

1. I'd support PhD student Tali and assure them they have every right to turn down Tiugu's proposal.
2. I'd tell PhD student Tali that consent can be interpreted in many ways – they could agree to the other student's proposal.
3. I'd make it clear to Tiugu that every researcher has to comprise their own data set – you can't make your life easier at the expense of others.
4. I'd try to convince PhD student Tali that sharing data is a common practice – they don't deserve to be a co-author.
5. I'd make it clear to both students that this is a personal conflict they have to work out among themselves.
6. The supervisor's task is to support students, which is why I'd speak with both of them and try to explain the complexity of the situation. I'd spell out to PhD student Tiugu that agreements with the interviewees always have to be honoured and if data is used in a new project, the subjects have to be notified and they must give consent. I'd advise PhD student Tali to consider if they could collaborate with PhD student Tiugu and publish a co-authored paper that both have contributed to equally.

III The example case about authorship, publishing and application of research results

Plagiarism Among the Faculty

A reviewer of research proposals notices that an applicant has used materials from other authors without citing them. The application is rejected and the reviewing committee decides to notify the applicant's university. They send the full review including the list of related works which should have been cited to the dean of the faculty of the initial applicant.

The applicant is an internationally respected researcher and a prominent figure in his discipline who has helped and supported the faculty throughout his long, prolific career. In addition, he is

in charge of planning further research projects and associated with several others. As a senior researcher at the university he has supervised many of the faculty's employees.

During the applicant's long career, there have been rumors as well as few overt accusations concerning plagiarism. However, all of them have been refuted as false accusations.

What would you do if you were the dean of the faculty?

1. I'd decide to solve the case myself. I'd have a private conversation with the researcher, listen to their viewpoint and condemn them for their carelessness.
2. I'd decide to gather more information on the researcher's previous projects. I'd form a committee that would critically review their previous publications. If more evidence pointed to plagiarism, I would bring proceedings against the researcher regarding academic fraud.
3. I find that the sent materials are solid proof of academic fraud. I'd make the case public knowledge in the faculty by writing to all staff members of the structural unit that we don't tolerate plagiarism. I'd warn the researcher that if they violate the rules again, they will be fired.
4. I'd decide to help the researcher who is clearly overburdened by their work assignments. I'd talk to the researcher and advise them to cut down the workload to avoid similar situations in the future.
5. I'd discretely address the issue in a smaller circle. I'd gather the immediate supervisor, a professor who's also a coworker and the researcher themselves. The four of us would discuss how such the situation came to be and how we could avoid these issues in the future.
6. None of the above. Academic fraud severely violates the principles of research integrity. This issue should be taken seriously and solved without bias. To ensure the solution is neutral, I'd turn to a person or committee that deals with academic fraud cases at the university. It's important to allow the researcher to defend themselves and make sure the allegations are justified. That's why it should be thoroughly thought through if a review by the funding institution is enough to prove guilt or whether additional info should be gathered. The head is also responsible for guaranteeing the integrity and privacy of the researcher until the case is closed. The researcher should be treated as innocent until proven guilty, which is why no information should be made public until proceedings are terminated. If guilt is indeed proven, it should be considered whether the researcher's name should be published. Previous agreements must be followed through and attention should be paid to the severity of the violation, the researcher's behaviour prior to the incident, etc. It's also important to take note of the ways these situations could be prevented in the future and how researchers could be supported following the principles of research integrity.

IV The example case about the researcher in the research community

Reviewing issue

A journal asks Doctor Valge if they'd be willing to pre-review a paper. As the title seems captivating, Valge agrees. Once he has read the entire paper, the content seems familiar to Doctor Valge. He recalls having heard a conference presentation by Doctor Must on the same topic.

Doctor Valge has no doubt that one of the authors of the reviewed paper is Doctor Must, whose research methods Valge has doubted for a while.

What would you do if you were doctor Valge?

1. I'd notify the journal that I can't review the paper since I know who the author is.
2. I'd write a thorough review and submit it to the journal. I'd make note of having an idea about the author's persona, though.
3. Having a gut feeling about the authors wouldn't significantly alter my judgment about the paper. I'd be as neutral as possible as the reviewer.
4. The journal expects me to give my unvarnished expertise. I'd write a critical review and voice my opinion on the used methodology.
5. I feel I couldn't remain entirely objective but I wouldn't want to go back on my promise to review. I'd ask a friendly colleague who's unaware of who the author is to write the review, but we'd agree to put me as the author.
6. I'd write to the editors of the journal and let them know of my doubts and critical stance toward the research methodology of Doctor Must. I'd see how the journal feels about the situation and act according to the editors' instructions.

V The example case about observance, promotion and application of research integrity

Colleague's accusation

Research fellow Rand goes to the head of the research group Professor Kallas, complaining that research fellow Põhi in the same group has publicly embarrassed the institution. According to research fellow Rand, they heard from students that research fellow Põhi had been staggering around and acting indecently during Walpurgis night. After all, this isn't the first incident like that. Research fellow Rand finds that behaviour like that violates the good practice of science, since it damages academic the integrity and the reliability of a research institution and sets a bad example for students. Rand finds that something should be done right away – it's very hard for them to work with Põhi and if Professor Kallas doesn't do anything, they will submit an official complaint to the research institution.

Professor Kallas then talks to research fellow Põhi, who admits that things might've happened the way Rand had described but that's not a violation of research integrity – blaming him for damaging academia is malicious and unjust. Research fellow Põhi stresses that work has been stressful lately and their free time is no one's business.

What would you do if you were professor Kallas?

1. I'd try to mend things between the co-workers, stressing that our joint goal is to complete the research project. After that we could discuss if long-time cooperation is in the cards.
2. I'd explain to Rand that what research fellow Põhi does in their free time is private business and has nothing to do with research integrity. I'd ask them not to submit an official complaint as that would only harm our work relationship.
3. I'd agree with research fellow Rand's critique and warn Põhi against such behaviour – serious consequences might follow and their career at the institution might suffer.
4. I'd feel the conflict definitely needs to be solved but I couldn't objectively assess the situation myself. I'd delegate the case to the head of department.

5. I'd do nothing. I'm convinced that the complaint made by research fellow Rand has no effect on the work of the research group. It's better to stay neutral in a conflict between two colleagues.

6. The head of the research group bears responsibility and it's their job to react and take a stance, regardless of whether the accusation is justified or not. The head of the group must defend their employee while honouring the code of conduct for research integrity. There's no way to draw a clear line between a researcher's private life and their professional activities. Someone will always disagree. The right to privacy and personal autonomy, the reliability of the researcher and the institution, and good cooperation are all equally important. You also have to be a good role model to students. That's why research institutions should develop agreements to solve these issues. The head of the research group could also go by these guidelines. If no such agreements are in place, then the head of the group must solve the incident on their own or ask colleagues and experts inside the institution for help.