

## **An Ethical Dilemma**

### **Scenario 1**

You are a newly appointed lecturer and you are asked to invigilate a final honours-level exam. It is not in your subject but you recognise some of the students from your own course. About half-way through the exam, one of students known to you puts up her hand and asks to be accompanied to the toilet. As you wait outside you hear her speaking to someone, although you can't hear what she is saying. You walk into the bathroom and see that she is talking to someone on a mobile phone. She immediately turns it off when she sees you. The student claims that it was a personal phone call, and that she didn't know that mobiles weren't allowed in the exam hall. You find that hard to believe, but on the other hand you have no concrete evidence that she was cheating. In your experience, she is an amiable, bright and hard-working student.

You should discuss as a group what you would do, why you have chosen that option and what the possible consequences of your actions may be.

## **Scenario 2**

You are studying Educational Psychology and have been asked to participate in a paired project, which involves a research component. At the beginning of the project you discuss ideas and decide to write something about autism, beginning with a small-scale literature review. You agree how to apportion the background reading and also agree the time and place of the next meeting. Half an hour before the meeting you get a text message from your project partner saying that 'due to circumstances beyond control' they can't make it. They don't appear in classes that week and you have to arrange the next meeting over e-mail. Again, they don't turn up to the meeting, but this time you receive no explanation. As the deadline for the project write-up is fast approaching, you decide to do the best you can on your own. You are understandably annoyed as you have lost a lot of time already, but at least the mark doesn't count towards your end of year grade. Or so you thought. During the next seminar for the Ed Psych module the tutor announces that there is a mistake in the handbook and the project will make 25% of your final grade. Your partner doesn't turn up to another seminar or meeting, and, as far as you know, they know nothing about the mistake in the handbook. You get on with the project single-handedly. Just before the date it is due, you receive a panicked phone call from your partner apologising and saying that their 'little brother has been ill and there isn't much support at home'. They plead with you to allow their name to appear on the project.

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### **Scenario 3**

You are a volunteer tutor for a community class in basic skills. You work with adult students who are a range of different ages, many of whom are in a classroom for the first time since they left school. At first, you enjoy the work, the group is lively and the students all seem to get on. Then it becomes clear that one student is being ostracised by the others. This individual often volunteers a response in class, but typically that response is unrelated to the matter in hand. They also have the habit of interrupting other students – seemingly without realising that this may aggravate the others. After a couple of weeks you decide to have a word with this student after the class. You try to be as sensitive as possible and begin by asking if they are enjoying the classes. The student opens up to you and confides that, although they are enjoying the classes, they find it hard to concentrate because they suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. They don't want you to tell anyone else about their condition. You reassure them that that isn't a problem and encourage them to continue with the course. However, at the end of the following week's class one of the other students stays behind and tells you that if you don't have the disruptive student removed, none of the others will return to the class. They know nothing about the disruptive student's circumstances.

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#### **Scenario 4**

You are a teacher in a secondary school. You have strict deadlines about the submission of class-work, but exemptions in exceptional circumstances – for example, documented illness – are possible. One of the highest-achieving boys in your class misses the deadline. He has never missed a deadline before. It happens to be a substantial piece of work that, if missing, would compromise his overall grade. You ask him to stay behind after the class and encourage him to volunteer a reason for the absence of the work. 'I'm sorry, I don't really have one', he replies. 'But it won't happen again.' You are very conscious that this uncharacteristic behaviour will have a tangible impact, and are tempted to grant him an extension over the weekend even though there is no proper explanation. But at the same time you are aware that you would not make this concession for every child.

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## **Scenario 5**

You are working in an English department at a secondary school. You have only been there for a few months. The team seems to get on well, however when you are alone with one of the team members she is very patronising and offensive to you. She is never like this in front of the others and you feel it is unfair as you have always tried to be professional and pleasant towards her.

Her attitude gets much worse over the following weeks and months. You know, although you are unable to prove it, that she is spreading malicious rumours about you. You cannot approach your subject head as you know he thinks this person is a wonderful and committed teacher. Lessons you have prepared have disappeared from your desk, and you have missed team meetings because she 'forgot' to tell you about them. You are becoming more and more stressed and have started dreading going to work in the morning. Just as you think it couldn't get any worse you learn that your bullying colleague is going to be promoted, which means that you'll be reporting directly to her. What are you going to do?

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