



Online Ethics Center
FOR ENGINEERING AND SCIENCE

Changing the Procedure

Author(s)

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Year

1993

Description

A scenario meant to stimulate discussion about how a graduate student should handle a group that does not want to change their experiment procedure.

Body

You are a member of a group of graduate students working on a large project. The results from your group's experiment are used for other experiment in the project. Your faculty supervisor, the principal investigator (PI) for the project, wants you to use a new procedure for your experimental work. The PI expects that the new procedure will yield results that are better suited to the experimental conditions of the other experimental work. The other students in your group do not wish to change the procedure. It will require more work and they think both that the PI will be impatient with the resulting delay, and that she will not notice if the old procedure is used.

You rely on the group for assistance for your own thesis work, so you want to deal tactfully with them, but you believe that if you use the old procedure, the quality of the data will suffer and you will mislead the PI and perhaps the entire scientific community.

You argue for using the new procedure and explaining to the PI that it will just take longer, but the rest of the group is not persuaded.

What do you do and how do you go about it?

Notes

Caroline Whitbeck introduced methods and modules for discussing numerous issues in responsible conduct of research at a Sigma Xi Forum in 2000. Partial funding for the development of this material came from an NIH grant.

You can find the entire sequence on the OEC at [Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research](#). Some information in these historical modules may be out-of-date; for instance, there may be a new edition of the professional society's code that is referred to in an item. If you have suggestions for updates, please contact the OEC.

Based on an idea of Arun Patel, Ravi Patil, MIT, 1993.

Contributor(s)

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Resource Type

Open-ended scenario

Parent Collection

Scenarios for Ethics Modules in the Responsible Conduct of Research

Topics

Mentors and Trainees
Research and Practice

Discipline(s)

Research Ethics

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