

Dilemma:

“A specific group of international colleagues is treated badly”

Each group has a host.

This dilemma card is for the host and contains:

- A host guide
- A dilemma
- Fact boxes
- A question guide for dialogue one and dialogue two

Host guide

As a host, your role is to facilitate a good, constructive dialogue where everyone gets to speak. Your role is not to participate by sharing your own perspective, but you are welcome to put your perspective into play by phrasing it as a question (“What if they ...?”).

Try to be curious (“Why do you think that?”) and investigative (“What if they react differently than you assume?”).

Aim to make it safe for participants to say or share something vulnerable by making it clear that different perspectives are welcome and that everyone should be respectful.

The dialogue is divided into two parts.

The first part is about giving advice to the person who posed the dilemma, and the second part is about the theme of the dilemma from the perspective of the panellists and their experiences at DTU.

On pages 3 and 4, you will find questions and data, which you can use to qualify the dialogue.

After reading this guide and skimming the question guide, please read out the dilemma to the panel. Give them a moment to reflect on the dilemma. Then initiate dialogue one.

Dilemma:

Where Jan works at DTU, there are many colleagues with international backgrounds. This contributes to an exciting environment, where you are curious about each other, and where there are many different perspectives -for the most part. Jan has on several occasions experienced that a particular group is treated differently. This group comes from a country outside Europe and generally has a little more difficulty with English, as their native language is from a completely different language family.

The first time he witnessed discrimination against the group was at a presentation, where a manager was hard on them because he found it difficult to understand what they were saying. In Jan's experience, the manager almost humiliated them instead of asking what the person didn't understand with genuine interest. It created an unpleasant and unsafe atmosphere, especially for the group giving the presentation, but for everyone else in the room as well.

The second time, Jan witnessed someone from the group being blamed for a machine breaking seemingly out of nowhere. It turned out that the person was innocent.

The third time, Jan overheard his colleagues joking in the lunch-room about how research coming from the country from which the group originates, is inferior.

Jan has now had enough. He feels he should do something. But what? Jan doesn't think the discrimination is aimed at the individuals in the group, but rather the stereotypical image of their culture and the language barrier that exacerbates it. Since it is not just one person who treats the group badly, the problem can't be solved by just having a chat with one single person. Fortunately, the majority of Jan's colleagues treat the group well.

However, he feels guilty for not speaking up or approaching the affected colleagues afterwards. As several of the people involved in the discrimination are in management positions, he felt that interfering would make him vulnerable.

He is asking the panel whether they think he should wait until next time and then speak up, if he should talk to the group and get their perspective, if he should approach a manager who isn't involved, or if they have a different suggestion.

Dialogue one:

1
What advice does the panel give?

- [Start by hearing each panellist's thoughts on the dilemma so everyone gets the chance to speak from the start]
- "What could the underlying cause(s) for the dilemma be?"
- "They have a high degree of cultural diversity, but how can they improve equity and inclusion?"
- "What do you think of the options stated by the person who posed the dilemma?"
- [Feel free to use the data from the boxes to boost the discussion]
- [Other investigative questions]
- "We have to come up with an answer, but you don't all have to agree. What does each of you think the person who posed the dilemma should do?"

The risk of developing depression increases 2.7 times, when employees feel discriminated against at the workplace. (Research by The National Research Centre for the Working Environment (NFA), 2023)

At DTU, we do not accept harassment (behaviour that is difficult to defend yourself against). If you experience or witness harassment, you are encouraged to talk about it with a colleague you trust. (For a list of contact options, see DTU Inside)

2 Dialogue two:

What do you do, and what could you do?

This part of the dialogue focuses on the panellists' own experiences at DTU.

Start dialogue two by telling the panel that the focal point is still the theme of the dilemma, but now they should look at the conditions in their own unit as well as considering other solutions.

Please note that dialogue two may be a bit more sensitive. Aim to create a safe and respectful space for everyone. The goal is still not to agree on everything, but to learn more about each other's perspectives.

- "Do you recognize part of or the whole dilemma, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "Do you work to promote a culture where different cultures thrive and feel included? If yes, how?"
- "Is there a part of the advice you gave that you practise in your unit? If yes, what? If no, would that be possible?"
- "What else could you do? At individual, group, and organizational level?"
- [Other investigative questions]
- "What will each of you take with you to your unit, either as a point of attention or as possible solutions related to the theme of the dilemma?"