

# Dilemma:

## “Others take credit for my work”

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:

Mads is a second-year PhD student. He is part of an exciting environment where he learns and grows professionally.

However, for their last two publications, he and a fellow PhD student felt compelled to add people who did not contribute to the list of authors. Most recently, it was one of his supervisors, even though the supervisor did not contribute to the publication with neither ideas, content, nor guidance. And the supervisor is even listed first, indicating that they are the main author.

This is frustrating to Mads and affects his motivation. Why fight for something if others take all or most of the credit for it? The hardest part, however, is that he doesn't know what to do about it. As a PhD student, he feels that there is too much at stake to speak up to his supervisor or file a complaint.

Fortunately, in Mads' experience, the vast majority of researchers are hardworking, conscientious, and caring. However, he finds that what he describes happens regularly. He believes that everyone should be recognized for their contribution and follow DTU's authorship attribution rules. He thinks that one of the reasons may be a tough competitive culture, where the way to the top of academia is measured by the number of publications.

Mads sometimes gets the feeling of a culture that reproduces itself—*"If I had to go through difficult stuff when I was a PhD student, the new generations of PhD students should too."* A kind of rite of passage. But how do you change it? Is it necessary to change it? What can he do to get his supervisor to respect the rules? And what can he do as a PhD student?

# 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?"
- "What do you think of the options stated by the person who posed the dilemma?"
- "What might the consequences be if Mads refused to list the supervisor's name?"
- [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?"

*#PleaseDontStealMyWork*  
 In 2022, the PhD student association PAND (PhD Association Network of Denmark) started the campaign #PleaseDontStealMyWork, which collected statements and reports from researchers and PhD students who had experienced colleagues taking credit for their work or ideas. The majority of cases were matters of so-called 'guest authorship', where someone—typically a senior researcher—is listed as co-author on an article without having contributed. A kind of trade that can benefit careers, says one of the initiators.

*In a new Danish study, one in three PhD students has listed a person who has not made a significant contribution to the research as co-author. Listing people as authors of a scientific article they did not make a significant contribution to is a violation of the international rules and official Danish standards. It happens because the PhD students either believe it is expected of them, or because they feel pressured to do so by a senior researcher. Videnskab.dk 2023*

# 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 the dilemma or parts of it, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "Are you actively working to create a culture where employees don't end up in Mads' situation? 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 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?"