



## Case-Based Learning in RCR Education

**Overview:** A learner-centered methodology with intense interaction between participants as they build their knowledge and work together as a group to analyze the case.

**Purpose:** Provide opportunities for participants to engage in the *process* of ethical decision making, to articulate and refine their thinking on topics associated with ethical and responsible research practices and to discuss how their understanding transfers to settings beyond the classroom.

Using relevant, real and authentic examples helps participants to:

- Connect the meaning of the story to their own contexts,
- Appreciate the complexities and the importance of conducting research responsibly, and
- Develop communicative, analytic and collaborative skills while deepening their content knowledge.

### Tips for Success

- Be aware of disciplinary differences in topic areas such as authorship and publication practices, so that you don't risk providing misinformation to your participants.
- Anticipate participants' questions and familiarize yourself with the relevant campus resources associated with each case so you can respond to them in real-time.
- Establish your professional expertise in your own discipline(s) will help earn credibility and respect as an experienced research mentor and practitioner.
- Explicitly acknowledge that you are not an expert on the responsible conduct of research and that you do not always know what to do when confronted with an ethical dilemma. Instead, you are a learning partner who will support them to engage in the systematic process of ethical reasoning and analysis of case studies.
- We highly recommend that you review the Scholarly Integrity Initiative website at [www.responsible.research.ubc.ca](http://www.responsible.research.ubc.ca) and/or complete the online Responsible Conduct of Research course at [www.citiprogram.ca](http://www.citiprogram.ca).

### Structuring Case Study Discussions

We recommend creating **small groups of 6 – 10 individuals** for these discussions. This size is large enough to ensure diverse perspectives are represented, while remain manageable for a facilitator or a group leader to encourage participation from all members.

There are a few ways to structure and facilitate case study discussions:

**A Framework of Ethical Decision-Making** supports participants in identifying ethically important aspects of a situation and in explaining their rationale when making recommendations or difficult decisions. However, it may hinder participation and engagement when used rigidly.

**A list of reflection prompts** highlights and guides the discussion on important issues. It may foster an organic dialogue that perhaps is more relevant to the participants' own experiences and contexts. However, you may have to contain and focus the conversation on occasion.

**Open-ended and self-directed inquiry** invites participants to identify ethically important aspects in a case and to formulate their own questions. They then engage in a discussion to share their approaches to the problem and rationale for their proposed solutions.



## Facilitating Case Study Discussions

During the case study discussions, your role is that of a facilitator while the participants collaboratively analyze and address problems that have no single right answer. It is important to note that some answers are acceptable and better than others while some are definitely wrong.

There are a few important considerations when managing small group discussions effectively:

### Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment

- Invite participants to introduce themselves
- Clarify expectations and intentions amongst participants and the facilitator (e.g., anonymity, curiosity, respect, etc.)
- Provide sufficient time and space for participants to gather their thoughts and contribute to discussions

### Encouraging Participations

- Let participants do most of the talking
- Ask participants to justify their opinions or viewpoint
- Invite alternate views or counterarguments
- Find polite ways of acknowledging those who respond consistently and quickly while creating space for others to contribute
- Try to involve the quieter participants (e.g., directly asking them questions or looking at them when asking the group)
- If and when a participant says something off track, perhaps ask for input from others or for clarification of their position to tweak out a better solution.
- Be cautious about expressing your own viewpoint, particularly before the discussion has fully developed, as it could shut down discussions or default back to a didactic format.



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### Expanding and Deepening Discussions

- **Shift time frame:** What next? How could this situation have been different? What could have been done earlier to prevent this from occurring? Is it too late to address this?
- **Shift points of view:** Who are the stakeholders? What expectations do they rightly have? How will each decision or action impact each of the stakeholders? What are the dynamics between these stakeholders?
- **Shift to another context:** How would this be handled in [your discipline, department, unit or research group]? How might [person/society/organization] address this issue?
- **Shift levels of abstraction:** What are the assumptions that [person] is making? Why might [person] hold this point of view?

#### REFERENCES

The developed content is adapted from the following:

- *Discussions*. Centre for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University Bloomington. Retrieved from: <https://citl.indiana.edu/teaching-resources/teaching-strategies/discussions/index.html>
- DuBois, J.M. (2013) *ORI Casebooks: Stories about Researchers Worth Discussing Instructor's Manual*. US Department of Health and Human Services. Retrieved from: [https://ori.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/Instructor's Manual\\_Final\\_edited.pdf](https://ori.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/Instructor's Manual_Final_edited.pdf)
- Porter, S., Brinkman, J., et al. (2009) *Facilitator Instructions and Guidance Notes*. Faculty of Medicine Responsible Conduct of Research Course, University of British Columbia.