

Department of Biological Sciences
Examples of Case Studies Used in Lab Instructor Training Session
How to deal with uncomfortable or unexpected situations

Case 1: Eduardo has a student that started the semester with a good demeanor and almost perfect scores. For over half of the semester, she has been the model student. Since spring break, she has become less cooperative in her lab group. She has even become more hostile to both Eduardo and her group members. She now refuses to participate in most of the lab work and frequently leaves lab before the end of the period. Most recently, she stormed out of Eduardo's lab after only an hour, muttering that her "lab partners are morons, Ed is a useless TA, I feel like I should hurt them. This class is an f—ing waste of time." She even slammed the door! She acted so angrily that some of the other students in the lab were worried that she might be a danger to herself or someone else. What would you advise Eduardo to do? If you could go back in time, before this incident, what are some things you might ask, look for, and/or do?

Case 2: Susan is responsible for her first lab section. For the second week of lab, she has all of her students' quizzes and lab work graded and sorted into folders (along with the peer evaluation forms) by lab group. Susan decides the quickest, easiest way to pass back the graded work and pass out the peer evaluation forms is to place each group's folder in the middle of their work area. During this same week, one of Susan's students, Janice, approaches her to say that, because of a disability, she is supposed to get double the amount of time to finish all of her quizzes and that she might often arrive late and must be excused for any tardiness. You are a veteran lab instructor observing Susan's lab section. What advice would you give Susan regarding her classroom management and accommodations for students with a disability?

Case 3: You are assisting a group of your students with a lab procedure, when there is a commotion across the room. Upon turning around you see that one of your students is sprawled out on the floor, and had apparently fainted without warning. The student is conscious but is rather stunned and does not seem to be himself. You think the student may need medical attention but you are not sure. What should you do?

Case 4: This week in lab, students are running gels and have been informed that they will be handling the potentially mutagenic and carcinogenic substance, ethidium bromide. They have been instructed that all food and drink items are banned from the lab. Two guys in your 8 am lab arrive with their Starbucks' coffees and refuse to leave them out in the hall when you ask them to. They claim that they get to drink coffee in the research lab they work in and that this amount of caution over a little ethidium bromide is silly. When you tell them that these are the rules, they say they are adults and you cannot make them remove their coffee from the room. What should you do?

Case 5: Your Tuesday evening (5:00-7:50) lab student, Karen, emails you Tuesday morning to say that her sister is having a baby on Wednesday in Dallas. Karen wants to be there for the birth and wants to leave lab early (5:30) to drive to Dallas. She has finished her pre-lab exercise and would like to turn it in to you, take the pre-lab quiz, and leave. What should you do?

Case 6: Marshall arrives in zo lab just in time for the pre-lab quiz. Marshall does not have his pre-lab exercise ready to hand-in when you begin checking them. He swears he has it completed but left it at home. This is the first time he has done this so you allow him to turn it in the next week. Two weeks later, Marshall again forgets his pre-lab exercise and asks if he can turn it in next week. Jane and Justin have also forgotten pre-labs this week and want to turn them in next week. You now have three late papers to grade while you catch up with your own course work. What do you do? What could have been done to avoid this situation?

Case 7: Hannah missed lab last week. This week she arrives and hands a doctor's note (dated for three days after her lab) to you. Hannah asks if she can take last week's quizzes and turn in any late work. What do you do?

Case 8: Jessie stops you after class to tell you they need extra time on the quizzes along with a printed version of the quiz. They swear to you they have special accommodations but either cannot or do not want to provide you with the form from the SSD Office. What do you do?

Case 9: Cooper emails you to say his grandmother has passed away and he needs to leave for the funeral today; the lab final starts in 5 minutes. What do you do?