



Case 2: Data Ownership

You are a graduate student who has been working in a lab for several years. As graduation comes around, you prepare to leave the lab for employment at another university. You ask your advisor to write a recommendation and a summary of your work in her lab. She does this and adds a list of research materials that you may not take with you, as well as a list of research areas – some not yet under investigation – and a statement that you agree not to work in these areas. Your advisor asks you to sign a copy of this document

- Does the advisor have the authority to require this statement from you?
- If you disagree with what your advisor is doing, who do you talk to?
- What materials, notes, etc do you have rights to when you leave?
- How should you go about determining your relationship with the lab you are in and the research you have been a part of once you leave?



Case 2: Variations

Data Ownership

The following variations of this case can be used to explore the issues further.

- Although leaving for a position in another university, you will continue collaboration with your current lab, expanding the research you have been doing into a multi-institutional project.
 - Does this entitle you to greater access to the records and data in your current lab?
- Rather than having a position in another university, you have a position at a commercial institution.
 - Does this change anything?
- There is some research you are interested in pursuing in your new position that has its foundation in some work that you did in your current lab. It is not an area of research your advisor is interested in pursuing and it does not appear on the list of “off-limits” research topics your advisor wants you to sign. To facilitate further work:
 - Do you take your lab notebooks with you when you leave?
 - Do you make copies of them?