

## Professional Ethics in Computing: Seminar 1 answers guidance

This “answer sheet” provides some guidance in answering the questions posed in Seminar 1.

### Scenario 1:

Who do you think did something wrong, if anyone? And why?

**Josh** was wrong to ask Alice for use of her account since this breaks the university network rules, and also the request exploits their friendship and is manipulative.

**Alice** was wrong to give her password to Josh, since we would expect her to be aware that this needs to be kept secure and giving access breaks the university rules.

Depending on context, **the University** may be wrong:

- (i) If the students had not been given proper induction regarding computer security and protecting passwords; or,
- (ii) If they knew that Josh’s account was disabled, did not fix it, but still required Josh to work on and submit his coursework over the University network.

If you had further information, would that make a difference? (e.g. if Josh’s account was disabled because he had misused it).

If **Josh** had his account disabled due to misuse, then this adds to his culpability. But we may also wonder why **the University** still requires him to work on and submit via the University network – this may be an oversight (negligence).

If **Alice’s** account included confidential information, then this adds to her culpability, since she is making this information vulnerable and exposing it to disclosure.

### Scenario 2:

How does the change affect your decision? And why?

Firstly, it is clear that **both** are computer science majors. Alice has graduated and Josh is in final year. Therefore, we would expect both to be fully aware of the computer security breach and there is little doubt they both acted wrongly.

Additionally, **Alice’s** account is now based at her company so by providing Josh with access she is breaking company rules and is exposing company and perhaps customer and client

information. This may be a breach of data protection law. In this situation, this becomes a rather more serious wrong-doing than in Scenario 1.

### Scenario 3:

Do you think Carol is right?

**Alice** has breached company policy and may even have broken the law, so a penalty is expected. Therefore Carol is right to take action.

However, the severity of **Carol's** action could be questioned, and this depends somewhat on labour laws governing the company. In many countries, immediate dismissal would not be acceptable. It would be wrong to take action that breached the labour laws.

Additionally, if **the company** had not provided sufficient induction in security, perhaps **Carol's** actions could be wrong (i.e. expecting **Alice** to be aware of security). However, since **Alice** is a computer science professional it would have been reasonable for **Carol** to have this expectation.

Would your decision be different if the company had never told Alice her email would be monitored?

This should make no difference since the company policy is the same whether email is monitored or not.