

Meeting with Dr Aniket Kumar 11 December 2018

Present: Prof D'Maris Coffman and Miss Helen Pascoe

Scope of Meeting

This meeting was held to discuss an email sent by Aniket dated 21 November 2018 (copy below), in which a student was copied in. The email disclosed that a second named student had failed their dissertation.

GDPR breach

Aniket noted that he understood that he had hit the "reply all" button, and accepted that this was a mistake. He acknowledged a breach in GDPR compliance and noted that he was very upset and tired when he sent the email.

D'Maris explained that unintentional mistakes are not a defence for a GDPR breach, and that HR were aware of the email and internal investigation. Due to the breach and the email content, the students have now been reassigned to a new supervisor.

Inappropriate Email Content

D'Maris further explained that the email (and the subsequent chain of emails following this one) were also defamatory to the School and Aniket's colleagues.

Mitigating Circumstances

Aniket noted that he felt that his term 1 workload had been high; he had taught in CM1, CM2 and PML. He also felt that he had little guidance/support and was often expected to do and also felt that he was given vast amounts of reading/preparation to complete at short notice. He said that he had planned to meet with D'Maris after the end of term to discuss these issues. D'Maris and Helen questioned why he would wait until the end of term, as this would have been too late to offer any support or intervene. Aniket responded that he did not know how to raise issues.

We discussed respect for colleagues and the need to raise teaching issues locally with the lecturer in the first instance; we also discussed freedom for lecturers to structure tutorials in different ways, and that there is leeway for tutors to develop their own teaching methods and use their own materials within the tutorials. D'Maris reported that long course materials uploaded to moodle were there for reference, and that tutors are not expected to read the full information. D'Maris also suggested ways to manage academic authority.

Aniket reported that he often feels that he is treated badly by colleagues; on probing he noted that poor behaviour was displayed by a former member of staff who left the department earlier this year.

Aniket reported frustrations from not having enough time for research.

D'Maris reminded Aniket that Research Associates in the department should expect to teach on average 4-6 hours per week, and that his average over the year falls well below this.

Working-Relationships

We discussed Aniket's professional relationship with Mr John Kelsey, which he described as "up and down"; Aniket felt that John had over-ruled him in the dissertation marking.

CPM Role

Aniket said that he has some good projects coming up in his role at CPM, but that he was upset that he had not had a lighter teaching load in term 1.

Research Support

We discussed the negative referee report from a submitted paper. D'Maris suggested that Aniket was struggling in rebooting his research career and suggested that he might benefit from having a line-manager who is able to offer more support and guidance. It was agreed that Stefano would continue to be a mentor for Aniket, and that D'Maris would approach Stani regarding the possibility of taking over line management for Aniket.

Actions

- D'Maris will talk to HR regarding the best way to manage the disciplinary process regarding the email copied to a student.
- The GDPR breach will be reported to the compliance team once HR have advised us on how best to handle this issue.
- D'Maris will talk to Stani regarding the possibility of becoming Aniket's line manager.
- Workload will be assigned earlier for 2019/20
- Aniket will raise future issues with the module leader in the first instance, then Grant and then D'Maris, in a timely fashion.
- Aniket will re-read the emails he has sent and apologise to the individuals concerned.

-----Original Message-----

From: Aniket, Kumar

Sent: 21 November 2018 17:50

To: Sergeeva, Natalya <n.sergeeva@ucl.ac.uk>

Cc: Li, Chen <chen.li.17@ucl.ac.uk>; Begum, Ruhana <ruhana.begum@ucl.ac.uk>

Subject: Re: rework of discussion

Importance: High

Dear Natalya,

There is a bit of story behind this, which I am not sure whether you are aware of. I am an Economist, with some very rudimentary knowledge of finance. I supervised Chen Li over the year. She is not the best student, but met with her frequently and supervised her as best as I could.

When I marked her dissertation, I didn't think it was great, but I thought she should have passed with a below average mark. John insisted that Li, Chen and another student Xu, Tiantian should fail. He had a very specific idea about what methodology they should have used.

That is when I realised John is teaching very specific methodology, which is entirely different from what I am trained in. I literally don't understand even the basic of this methodology that is being taught. I also don't understand why she failed. I have twenty years of teaching experience, so I am supremely confident that I know everything there is to know in Economics. Unfortunately, Finance is an entirely unrelated field that I know very little.

Given this situation, I have no idea how to advise Li, Chen or Xu, Tiantian to change her dissertation and resubmit so that she can pass. In this, I would be entirely unethical of me and CPM to assign her to me, knowing fully well that both of them are going to fail.

I take my responsibility to the students and CPM very seriously. In this case, since I am entirely incapable of giving her any useful advice, I would be doing something very unethical in continuing to supervise her.

Further, I hope you understand that there is legal angle to this. If Li, Chen and Xu, Tiantian fail, then we at CPM would have failed to undertake our duty of care towards the students. So, there could be legal complications. So, I would urge you think about these two cases very carefully before you make a decision.

I have emailed John and Ruhana about this. Ruhana has taken this up with Victoria. I want this to be taken seriously and I will push back on this because I think me supervising Li, Chen and Xu, Tiantian is unethical.

Best wishes,
Aniket

Dr. Kumar Aniket

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> On 21 Nov 2018, at 16:56, Sergeeva, Natalya <n.sergeeva@ucl.ac.uk> wrote:

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> Hi Aniket,

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> Could you please have a discussion with your student, Chen Li (17054595), chen.li.17@ucl.ac.uk, about how to re-work the dissertation?

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> Kind Regards,

> Natalya

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