

## CASE STUDY 1

Pat: Prof, I need to switch groups.

Prof: I'm surprised to hear that – your group seems to be working so well together.

Pat: Well – I don't know how to tell you this exactly....Anyway, last night I received a lot of obscene and vulgar comments on Instant Messenger. Here, I printed them out.

Prof: (reading through the material) Wow, I see what you mean.

Pat: The messages looked like they were anonymous. But I found out that it was really one of my group members. Worse, I even think that Chris knew I'd find out!

Prof: Ouch!

Pat: I want out of Chris' group!

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### Overnight

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Chris: I can't believe Pat came to you before even saying anything to me – that violated our ground rules about trying to settle things ourselves first! It turns out it was a practical joke by Pat's best friend who somehow got my password...I didn't even know about it. I feel betrayed by Pat – it's going to be hard to work with him.

## CASE STUDY 2

On the day that a mid-semester group project was due in her large enrollment, non-majors course, Professor Sharon Washburn handed each group an evaluation sheet. She asked the groups to have a brief discussion about each member's contribution to the project, then fill out and sign the evaluation sheet on the basis of that conversation. Each group then attached the evaluation sheet to the project, and handed it in. The following day, Prof. Washburn received the following e-mail message from a member of one of the groups.

“Dear Professor Washburn:

I realize that you may not be able to do anything at this point, but I wanted to let you know what happened with our group project. Ashley, one of our group members, did nothing to help with the project. We invited her to group meetings but she kept giving us excuses for why she couldn't attend. In class when you handed out the evaluation forms, Ashley took charge of the sheet before we had a chance to talk, and gave everyone, including herself, full credit. I know we all signed it, but it's because she took us by surprise and we didn't know what else to do. I don't think it's fair that she's going to get the same grade as the rest of us – the rest of us worked hard to get it done.

Sincerely,  
Beth Snyder – Group 14”

**See reverse side for Case Study 3**

## CASE STUDY 3

At first the semester seemed to be going well with all of the groups in Professor Stanley Milkovics' biology course, at least as far as he could tell. In his course, students work in groups in the lecture class, and for a number of the laboratory exercises.

About two-thirds of the way through the semester, however, seemingly out of the blue, all three of the male members of one of the groups approached Prof. Milkovics to complain about the fourth member, a woman named Stacey. They told him that they had discussed Stacey's contribution to both the PBL sessions and the laboratory exercises amongst themselves, and had decided to leave Stacey a note informing her that they were taking all her group points away from her PBL grade (all group members had given themselves this prerogative in the "consequences" statement of their group ground rules). When asked by Professor Milkovics, they admitted that they had never said anything about their discontent to Stacey prior to sending her the note.

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### **Overnight**

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Stacey was waiting outside Dr. Milkovics' office door bright and early the next day. She immediately began to complain about how unfairly she had been treated by her group members. She claimed that they had never warned her that they were unhappy with her, and that she had reasonable explanations that excused her tardiness to group meetings, having to leave lab in the middle of exercises, not participating in out-of-class group meetings, and so on. She felt that she should not lose these points, even though she had signed the ground rules statement. She threatened to go to the department chair or higher if this were to happen to her.