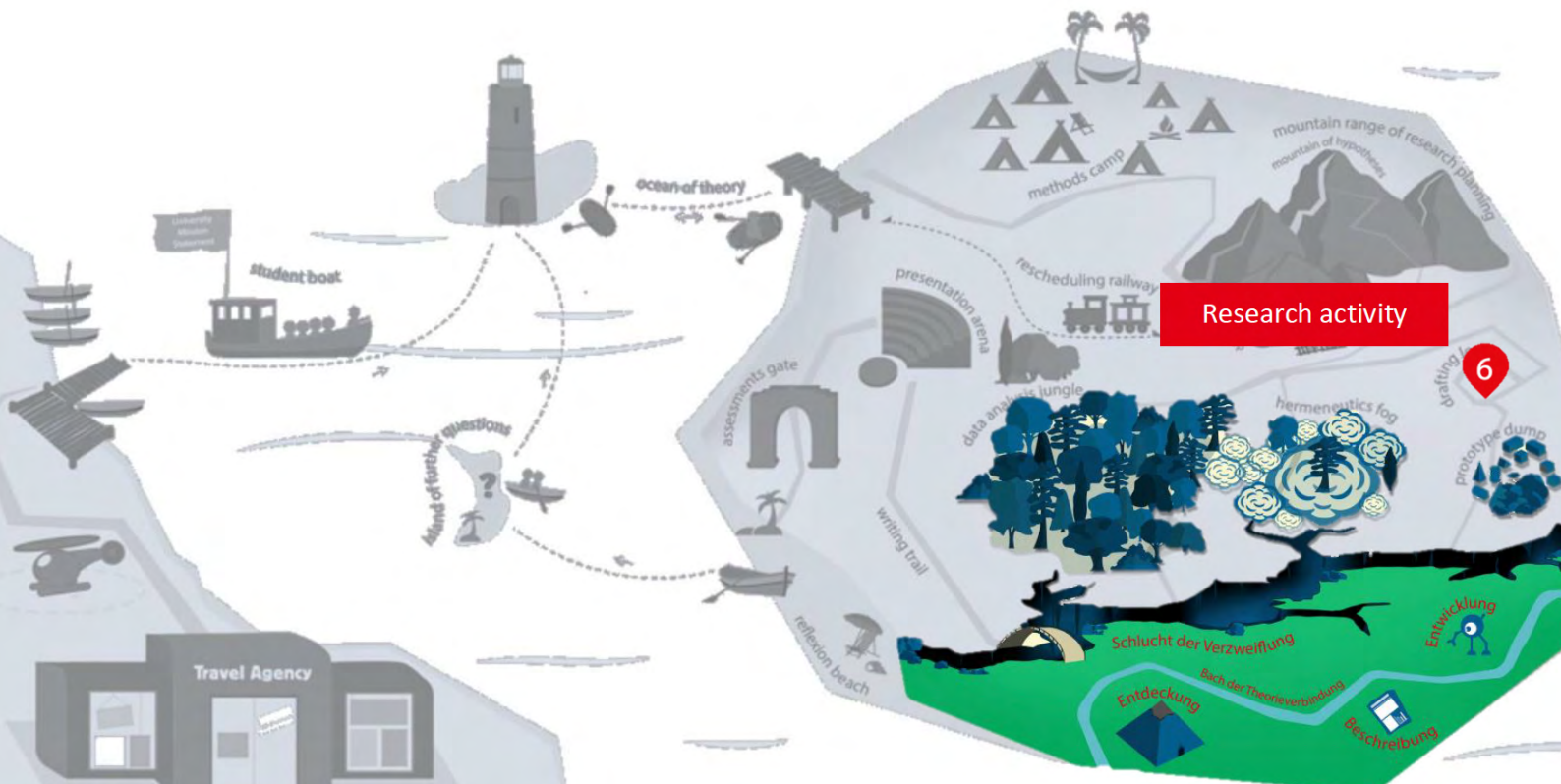




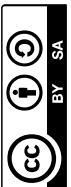
Shooting stars and Slowpokes

Case vignette for tutors



KEYWORDS:

MOTIVATION, FAIRNESS, GUIDANCE & AUTONOMY



This case vignette is licensed under a Creative Commons Attributions 4.0 International License. The author should be credited as follows when sharing under the same conditions: Preiß, J., Bartels, M., Herrmann, A.-C., Krein, U., Lübecke, E., Watanabe, A. & Reinmann, G. for FideS-Transfer & Insel der Forschung 2.0.

Metadata

Authors: FideS-Transfer-Project Team

Link: https://inselderforschung.blogs.uni-hamburg.de/2024/01/30/shootingstars-und-lahmeenten-tutor_innen/

Recommended citation:

Preiß, J., Bartels, M., Herrmann, A.-C., Krein, U., Lübecke, E., Watanabe, A. & Reinmann, G. (2024). Tears in the Office – Case vignette for tutors. Hamburg; Kaiserslautern; Potsdam. Projekt FideS-Transfer & Insel der Forschung 2.0.

GEFÖRDERT VOM



#7: Shooting stars and slow pokes



The following case vignette describes a situation in a teaching and learning context that aims to promote research-based learning. The situation described comes from interviews with coordinators of research-based learning projects and was adapted for both instructors and tutors. The case vignette addresses a typical challenge that occurs in courses designed to encourage research-based learning. This case vignette can help you reflect and consider how you as a tutor would react in or how you might prevent such a situation. To encourage this, each case vignette provides questions for reflection and proposes various attitudes and approaches.

Instructions for tutors




Tutors are employed for a wide variety of activities in the context of research-based learning. Additionally, the lecturers' expectations of their tutors differ widely. It is therefore important for you to clarify in advance what is expected of you. Which decisions can you make? Can you advise student groups? What authority do you have, and where are your limits?

At the same time, it is important that you know your own limits. What do you wish to take responsibility for, and what don't you? Which skills do you have, and which don't you have?

Depending on your role as a tutor in a research-based learning context, the attitudes and possible reactions presented in the case vignettes could suit quite well or may exceed your skills and authority. This is why it is important that you understand the case vignettes as suggestions. If you are unsure which approach you should take in a tutorial or if you can choose one of the proposed actions, be sure to ask the responsible lecturer.

An icon behind each suggested measure for a case vignette indicates our estimation of whether you can take this path independently and without consultation or should probably discuss it with the lecturer first. However, these estimations are only preliminary and need to be scrutinized within each concrete context.



Icon	Meaning
	<i>You are on land with solid ground under your feet ...</i> this symbol means that the actions and reactions so designated can be implemented easily and without much effort. You can probably take these paths in your tutorial independently and without consulting the lecturer.
	<i>You have left the island and are at anchor, but are still near the shore ...</i> the actions and reactions designated with the anchor symbol might take some more time to implement, and may have a more substantial impact on the tutorial and the connected research-based learning courses. Consider carefully whether your skills and authority suffice to act independently. If you are unsure, discuss them with the lecturer.
	<i>You are on the high seas and in an uncertain situation in which unpredictable weather can occur ...</i> this icon is used to indicate that certain actions or reactions may require substantial efforts on your or the students' part and have a strong impact on the research-based learning. It is advisable to discuss these suggestions with the lecturer.



Shooting stars and slowpokes

Half-time! The semester is half over and you realize that the project groups in your course are showing big differences in their motivation and their performance. Besides a thin midfield there are two high-flying groups whose motivation and progress are very impressive. But there are also two groups that are struggling to move forward and one team that is doing the bare minimum. On the one hand, the tutorial aims for personal responsibility and selfmanagement, on the other hand, the groups do not see how far apart they are. Accordingly, you need to step in as someone with an overview – insofar as you and the lecturer wish to, that is.

Keywords: Student Motivation, Fairness and Equity, Guidance and Autonomy, Time management & Workload, Difference and Heterogeneity



Questions for reflection

The situation described above is a typical challenge for tutors and lecturers when they support students in research-based learning. The following questions for reflection can help to look at such situations from various perspectives and then to come to different decisions:

- **Did you and the responsible lecturer make your assessment criteria clear from the beginning?**
- **How satisfied or unsatisfied would you and the lecturer be with very heterogeneous results?**
- **Which benefits and drawbacks would come with more structured guidance, and which with freer, more open guidance?**
- **Do you feel responsible for acting as a regulator?**
- **If you were to intervene in the process: would you be doing it for yourself or for your students?**



Attitudes and Approaches

The following sections will describe attitudes on the one hand and on the other hand preventative or intervening measures on the other hand for handling the situation described. First, attitudes will be described that could influence whether and how to respond. Following that, potential measures are presented. These are examples from concrete praxis in higher education, either preventative or intervening.

Attitudes

By attitudes we don't mean concrete measures, but rather the perspectives of lecturers and tutors in various situations. Depending on these attitudes, situations can be interpreted as "problematic" and "challenging" or as "desirable" and "normal". As a tutor, it is important for you to know both your own attitude and that of the lecturer in order to support the student as well as possible. The lecturer's attitude can also give you orientation to align your own attitude and to communicate the lecturer's expectations to the students accordingly.

Letting students organize the process themselves

You and the main lecturer are convinced that students must take responsibility for their own project. You assume that lecturers or tutors should only get involved when group work goes completely off course. As a result, you are unconcerned by differences in performance during the process.

In the situation described here this could mean: You restrain yourself and exercise no influence on the process.

Prevention

Preventative action prevents the situation described or at least makes it less likely. Of course there is no guarantee.



Conducting team building measures before starting the project

You organize an (external) provision in team building for the participants of the research-based course at the beginning of the project. This provision conveys to the students the positive effects of building and structuring a team with different roles, e.g. secretary, timekeeper, speaker, devil's advocate, etc.

For the specific situation described here: The groups receive instruction in how to structure themselves better and work more effectively toward their goals.



Determining a contact person for the lecturer

You insist on at least one contact person per group with whom you then hold regular short and informal meetings.

For the specific situation described here: This relatively informal path enables you to easily exchange information and ask about group targets and satisfaction. At the same time, you can also influence the process more easily or at least propose certain solutions.



Surveying the needs of the groups

At the beginning of the semester, you can ask the students how closely supervised they would like to be and how much structured guidance they wish for. You could then meet their needs accordingly.

For the specific situation described here: The students themselves take responsibility for the degree of your involvement as tutor in the processes within the group. In this situation you do not need to decide yourself whether you should adjust your involvement.

Indirect (attending) measures

Attending measures do not affect the students directly, but rather in a roundabout way.



Using project presentations as opportunities for feedback

You organize an event for the end of the semester at which all the students present their results to one another.

For the specific situation described here: On the one hand the students know from the beginning that they are themselves responsible for their results and may be more motivated. On the other hand, the event shows them what they could have managed in the time provided. This way they receive a more natural and neutral feedback on their process compared to those of their peers without the input of an authority.

