RESPONSIBLE AUTHORSHIP GUIDANCE

The aim of this document is to provide UT researchers with a springboard for productive discussion on the critical topic of authorship in the scholarly environment. This guidance applies to all researchers with a special emphasis on early-career researchers.

The University of Texas at Austin recognizes that authorship is a keystone of scholarly endeavor. As such, the university seeks to promote responsible authorship and publication practices. The authorship guidelines outlined in this document are applicable to all forms of scholarly output including, but not limited to, journal manuscripts, grant proposals, posters, presentations, art, books, and reports. For collaborative research endeavors, determining authorship inclusion should be a joint effort by all collaborators. The principal investigator (PI) has the added responsibility for initiating discussions regarding authorship and ensuring that adequate attribution is given to each individual regardless of title or position.

Authorship Criteria

The university acknowledges that authorship conventions vary across disciplines, resulting in a range of acceptable authorship practices. In assessing individual contributions to determine whether authorship is warranted, all researchers must be informed of authorship practices established in their department, college, and professional societies. In general, authorship is granted to those who have made an intellectual contribution and are willing to assume responsibility for the validity of the work.

UT researchers are also expected to comply with journal-specific guidelines and recommendations regarding authorship and publication. Many journals uphold The International Committee of Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE) authorship guidelines. Therefore, it is recommended that all researchers be familiar with the ICMJE criteria:

1) Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work;
2) Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
3) Final approval of the version to be published;
4) Agreement to be accountable for all aspects of the work in ensuring that questions related to the accuracy or integrity of any part of the work are appropriately investigated and resolved.

Unacceptable Authorship Practices

Although the conventions and practices regarding authorship vary across disciplines, the following practices are unethical and detrimental to the research enterprise:

- **Ghost authorship** occurs when the identity of individuals who made a significant intellectual contribution to the work is concealed.

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- **Gift authorship** occurs when individuals are added to the list of authors without making a significant intellectual contribution as a reward or gift.
- **Guest authorship** occurs when individuals are added to the list of authors without making a significant intellectual contribution in order to enhance the credibility of the work.

**Acknowledgements**

Significant contributions that do not rise to the level of authorship should be publicly acknowledged. In accordance with recommendations from the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE), permission to be listed in the acknowledgements should be granted in advance of publication.²

**Authorship Disputes**

If a difference in scholarly opinion regarding authorship arises, disputing parties are encouraged to resolve the matter through direct resolution. In the event that disputing parties are unable to come to a satisfactory agreement, each party may involve their respective department chair for additional assistance. At any time, disputing parties may consult the appropriate University Ombuds Office to explore additional options for resolution. Authorship disputes that involve a credible and specific allegation of research misconduct as defined in the Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) 7-1230, *Research Misconduct*, should be reported to the University’s Research Integrity Officer (RIO).

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CRediT AUTHOR STATEMENT

The contributor roles taxonomy (CRediT) statement may serve as a helpful tool for framing discussions around individual contributions and authorship. Completion of this form is not a requirement and does not represent a guarantee of authorship. Ultimately, the PI is responsible for evaluating each individual’s contribution to determine whether it rises to the level of authorship.

Name: 
Title: 
Institution: 

1. **Conceptualization** – Ideas; formulation or evolution of overarching research goals and aims.

Specify contribution:

2. **Methodology** – Development or design of methodology; creation of models.

Specify contribution:

3. **Software** – Programming, software development; designing computer programs; implementation of the computer code and supporting algorithms; testing of existing code components.

Specify contribution:

4. **Validation** – Verification, whether as a part of the activity or separate, of the overall replication/ reproducibility of results/experiments and other research outputs.

Specify contribution:

5. **Formal analysis** – Application of statistical, mathematical, computational, or other formal techniques to analyze or synthesize study data.

Specify contribution:

6. **Investigation** – Conducting a research and investigation process, specifically performing the experiments, or data/evidence collection.

Specify contribution:

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3 Reproduced from Brand et al. (2015), Learned Publishing 28(2) and adopted from The Ohio State University’s Authorship Guidelines. Retrieved from https://www.elsevier.com/authors/policies-and-guidelines/credit-author-statement.
7. **Resources** — Provision of study materials, reagents, materials, patients, laboratory samples, animals, instrumentation, computing resources, or other analysis tools (such as building a unique apparatus or developing a novel technique).

Specify contribution:

8. **Data curation** — Management activities to annotate (produce metadata), scrub data and maintain research data (including software code, where it is necessary for interpreting the data itself) for initial use and later re-use.

Specify contribution:

9. **Writing, original draft** — Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically writing the initial draft (including substantive translation).

Specify contribution:

10. **Writing, review and editing** — Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work by those from the original research group, specifically critical review, commentary or revision—including pre- or post-publication stages.

Specify contribution:

11. **Visualization** — Preparation, creation and/or presentation of the published work, specifically visualization/data presentation.

Specify contribution:

12. **Supervision** — Oversight and leadership responsibility for the research activity planning and execution, including mentorship external to the core team.

Specify contribution:

13. **Project administration** — Management and coordination responsibility for the research activity planning and execution.

Specify contribution:

14. **Funding acquisition** — Acquisition of the financial support for the project leading to this publication.

Specify contribution:

15. I was responsible/contributed to the data shown in Figure(s):
16. I was responsible/contributed to the generation of Figure(s):
AUTHORSHIP
FAQS

Q: When should authorship discussions take place?

Guidance: It is recommended that discussions regarding authorship take place early on in a project; however, these discussions alone do not provide a guarantee of authorship. Throughout the project, expected contributions should be evaluated and authorship agreements may evolve based on the actual contributions of each party.

Q: How is authorship order determined?

Guidance: Norms regarding authorship order vary across disciplines and even within sub-disciplines. Consult with your PI, department chair, or unit head for guidance on field-specific practices in assigning authorship order. In addition, ensure you and your collaborators are compliant with journal guidelines regarding authorship order and practices prior to submitting your manuscript. If there is an article processing charge associated with publication, the individual or institution who pays the fee should not receive additional consideration regarding authorship inclusion or order.

Q: Who should I speak with regarding my position on the authorship list?

Guidance: The PI is responsible for initiating discussions regarding authorship and ensuring that adequate attribution is given to each individual regardless of title or position.

Q: Is ghost, gift, or guest authorship considered research misconduct?

Guidance: Research misconduct is a federally defined term that means fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism in proposing, performing, or reviewing research, or in reporting research results. Concerns related to misattributed authorship are not reviewed under the university’s research misconduct policy unless they involve a clear allegation of fabrication, falsification, or plagiarism; however, unethical authorship practices violate the university’s principles of the responsible conduct of research and may involve other policy violations. These concerns should be disclosed to the department chair or unit head for assessment.

Q: How should I appropriately recognize my mentor’s direct or indirect contribution to my ongoing postgraduate work?

Guidance: Recognition of an individual’s contribution to a project can include: 1) authorship, for those individuals who make a substantial intellectual contribution; 2) acknowledgement, for those individuals whose contribution is significant but does not rise to the level of authorship; and/or 3) in-text attribution, for those individuals whose work or ideas require citation. Evaluating an individual’s contribution:

4 Adapted from an audience Q&A for a previous Good Research Integrity Training (GRIT) presentation.
6 Handbook of Operating Procedures (HOP) 7-1230, Research Misconduct. Retrieved from https://policies.utexas.edu/node/1707

Revised Fall 2022
contribution should be carried out within discipline norms, regardless of title or position. An authorship evaluation tool, such as the Contributor Roles Taxonomy (CRediT) author statement,\(^7\) may be helpful in framing discussions around authorship. In addition, consider reviewing journal-specific authorship guidelines to ensure alignment with the journal’s expectations and policies.\(^8\)

**Q: What are some best practices for an early-career researcher to broach the topic of authorship with a mentor or senior collaborator?**

*Guidance:*

- Ask to discuss the senior collaborator’s approach to authorship
- Ask about authorship early on and discuss throughout the project
- Ask about the lab policy regarding authorship
- Consider keeping a record of your contributions throughout the project in the form of weekly or monthly summaries
- Advocate for yourself based on your contributions
- Maintain professionalism
- Suggest authorship norms in your discipline as a discussion topic during a graduate seminar
- Speak with your academic advisor or another mentor for suggestions on how to discuss authorship with a senior collaborator

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\(^7\) CRediT author statement. Retrieved from [https://www.elsevier.com/authors/policies-and-guidelines/credit-author-statement](https://www.elsevier.com/authors/policies-and-guidelines/credit-author-statement)

\(^8\) For example, *PLOS ONE Authorship Guidelines*. Retrieved from [https://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/authorship](https://journals.plos.org/plosone/s/authorship)