

Guidelines 7-020AUTH

Guidelines on Determining Authorship in Scholarly or Scientific Publications, including Resolution of Disputes Regarding Authorship

(implementing University [Policy 7-020](#) ---Determining Authorship in Scholarly or Scientific Publications)

Date 2021-06-10

I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

A. PURPOSE—INTRODUCTION.

These Guidelines are developed under authority of the Vice President for Research, and are intended to provide guidance for members of the University community to implement University [Policy 7-020](#)-- Determining Authorship in Scholarly or Scientific Publications. This document should be read in conjunction with Policy 7-020, and any associated University Rules, and any relevant Supplemental Rule adopted by an involved academic unit.

B. SCOPE--APPLICABILITY

These Guidelines apply to all academic units and all members of the University community that are within the scope of Policy 7-020, which currently provides that

“This Policy applies to all faculty members, students, postdoctoral fellows and other non-faculty academic-employees (see [Policy 6-309](#)), and staff employees of the University of Utah.” Policy 7-020 Rev 0.

II. DEFINITIONS

Authorship confers intellectual credit, responsibility, and accountability for published work.

III. GUIDELINES

A. CRITERIA FOR DETERMINING AUTHORSHIP

1. University-wide criteria, and discipline-specific Supplemental Rules.

Policy 7-020, recognizing that authorship practices may be very different for different disciplines, sets forth certain generally applicable principles, and then requires the various academic units of the University to develop internal regulations appropriate for the particular disciplines, in the form of Supplemental Rules for authorship determinations.

a. For generally applicable principles, Policy 7-020 provides that,

“The University recommends that determinations of authorship be based on the following four criteria, defined by the International Committee for Medical Journal Editors (ICMJE):

- Substantial contributions to the conception or design of the work; or the acquisition, analysis, or interpretation of data for the work;
- Drafting the work or revising it critically for important intellectual content;
- Final approval of the version to be published; and
- 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.”

Elaborating on those general principles, the Office of the Vice President for Research adopts the following Guidelines regarding acceptable standards for substantive contributions that would lead to attribution of authorship. These Guidelines are intended to allow for variation in disciplinary best practices while ensuring authorship is not inappropriately assigned. In the event of a conflict between these Guidelines and an academic unit’s regulation, these Guidelines will control decisions.

b. Guideline for determining a Person’s Authorship Level on a Document

Taken from ICMJE guidelines and institutional experiences of Drs. Lisa H. Gren, L. Scott Benson and Caren J. Frost.

Use this template to determine if an individual is an author on a document. If an individual is to be considered an author, they will need to have completed one activity in each category. To be the first or last author, the person will typically have completed at least nine of the 11 activities on the check list. For other author positions on a document, it will need to be negotiated with the first and/or last author as the research and document develop process begins.

Table 1. Template--Determining a Person’s Authorship Level on a Document

Criteria	Person’s Contribution	Person’s Effort for Each Component
Contributed to <i>(at least one required)</i>	- Conceptualizing the project - Designing the project - Obtaining data - Analyzing data - Interpreting data	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Wrote & provided intellectual content for <i>(at least one required)</i>	- Drafts of the document - Revisions of the document	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>
Provided <i>(required)</i>	- Final approval of the manuscript	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accountable for <i>(all required)</i>	- Integrity of Person’s own work	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integrity of the work of all co-authors, e.g. “all aspects of the work” - Integrity of investigation of any remaining questions that arise during drafting and revisions that result in publication of a final manuscript 	□
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c. Roles not considered authorship: Acknowledgements, Gift Authorship, and Ghost Authorship.

Individuals who do not meet the requirements for any level of authorship, but who have provided a valuable contribution to the work, should be *acknowledged* in another form for their contributing role as appropriate to the publication. Thus, an individual who contributed substantially to the work, but does not meet qualifications to be an author, may be designated as a contributor or collaborator in an Acknowledgment or Article Information section of the manuscript.

“*Gift authorship*” is a commonly used phrase meaning being listed as an author, at any level, without actually meriting such recognition. It should not be conferred on those who have not made intellectual contributions to the work, or whose intellectual contributions are so limited as to not merit any level of authorship. For example, provision of routine technical services or a valuable reagent, referral of patients or participants for a study, assistance with data collection and management, or review of a completed manuscript for suggestions, are activities unlikely to meet criteria for authorship. Although not qualifying as co-authors, individuals who assist with the research effort in these ways may warrant another appropriate form of *acknowledgement* in the completed paper or presentation.

“*Ghost authorship*” is a commonly used phrase meaning to intentionally not identify as an author someone who has made substantial contributions to the research or writing of a manuscript to an extent that merited some level of authorship. This practice includes employing an author for hire with the understanding that they will not be credited as an author. Ghost authorship is a practice that is not consistent with the ethical obligations of members of the University of Utah community, and does not comport with the principles of Policy 7-020 or those outlined in these Guidelines.

B. POLICY AND GUIDELINES IMPLEMENTATION

Many institutions and peer-review journals have established standards for determining authorship that have consistent key principles. Experience with best practices demonstrates that being transparent and communicating these key principles at the beginning of projects helps to promote constructive, conflict-free collaborations. In practice, various inducements have sometimes fostered authorship determination practices that fall short of these standards. While so-called ghost writing and gift authorship (as described above) reflect one extreme, more commonly substandard practices are employed to improve the credibility of intellectual work, or increase competitiveness for publication or funding, or avoid interpersonal conflict among collaborators.

To avoid these pitfalls, the recommendation of the Office of the Vice President for Research is that as early as possible in the research or scholarly process, collaborators should discuss and agree on the general requirements for determining authorship of any manuscript that may reasonably be anticipated to report results of joint work or otherwise arise from the research project. This discussion should include examining the principles guiding authorship decisions, with reference to Policy 7-020, the relevant Supplemental Rules of academic units supplementing this Policy, this Guidance document, and potentially similar policy and guidance documents from their respective disciplines. To prevent misunderstandings, it is recommended that discussions of authorship determination standards be held openly and frequently within collaborative projects. Agreements, in writing, should be established between potential coauthors early in the writing process for each manuscript, and these agreements should be reviewed and revised as needed to reflect changes in the actual contributions of each individual as the work progresses.

C. AUTHORSHIP DISPUTES AND RESOLUTION

1. [Policy 7-020](#) states that:

“Conflicts related to authorship may arise at any time during the research or scholarly process, resulting from differing perceptions of one’s contributions and resulting attribution of credit. The University seeks to have dispute resolution procedures which lead to timely effective resolutions, facilitate excellence in research/ creative activity, support collegial respectful relationships among participants, and in other respects serve the best interests of the University. The office of the Vice President for Research shall have a primary role in developing Rules, Procedures, or Guidance documents for dispute resolution methods to serve those ends, consistent with this Policy. (Note that if a dispute involves an allegation of fabrication or falsification of data or plagiarism the dispute is subject to [Policy 7-001](#)--Policy for Research Misconduct.)”

2. In furtherance of that duty the office of the Vice President for Research provides this guidance for resolution of disputes.
 - a. Resolution of disputes among collaborators through open and collegial discourse and mutual agreement is strongly encouraged. To facilitate this process, any prior decisions or discussions among collaborators, including verbal or written agreements between them, should be reviewed and considered. Applicable academic unit internal policies (Supplemental Rules), Policy 7-020 and associated University Regulations, and these Guidelines and any documented customary practices in the relevant discipline should be applied, as appropriate. Extending an invitation to a mutually agreed upon party outside the group who is familiar with publication norms in the field to informally serve as a neutral facilitator may ensure that all viewpoints are weighed and considered and objectively applied. It is expected that most disputes will be resolved collegially among collaborators.
 - b. If the disagreement cannot be resolved among collaborators, input should be sought from a neutral third party, such as a University Ombudsperson or another trusted party.
 - i. Department-level resolution. The collaborators should engage the Department Chair or their designee to facilitate a resolution of the dispute acceptable to all parties. This procedure assumes that the Department Chair is not a direct party to the dispute and does not otherwise have a conflict of interest. If

multiple departments are involved in the dispute or the Department Chair has a conflict, the parties may opt to engage the University Ombudsperson.

- ii. Engagement of the Office of the University Ombudsperson. The University of Utah's ombudsperson office is a resource available to all members of University of Utah and can act as a neutral party to mediate disputes at any point in the process. The ombudsperson is skilled at facilitating conflict resolution and while they cannot adjudicate an authorship dispute by taking formal action, they may bring together the parties involved to assist them in reaching their own settlement.
- iii. If the dispute involves doctoral research by a student, the student should refer the matter to the chair of their dissertation committee. If the chair of the dissertation committee has a conflict (i.e., is a coauthor of the work), then a referral should be made to the Director of Graduate Studies of the student's program to facilitate resolution. Resolution at the Dean level. If the steps outlined above are not able to yield timely resolution, the Dean of the Graduate School or the Associate Vice President for Faculty, whichever is more appropriate given the circumstances of the dispute, may work to negotiate a resolution of the dispute acceptable to the parties.

IV. POLICIES, PROCEDURES, FORMS, REFERENCES, AND OTHER RELATED RESOURCES

- [Policy 7-020](#)-- Determining Authorship in Scholarly or Scientific Publications.

V. CONTACTS

Policy 7-020 and these Guidelines Owner and Contact Person: Erin Rothwell, PhD, Associate Vice President for Research Integrity and Compliance

Policy Officer for Policy 7-020: Vice-President for Research

VI. HISTORY

Last updated and approved by the Vice President for Research: [April 23, 2021]